

S E R M O N S

O N

Practical Christianity.

By HENRY STEBBING, D.D.

Archdeacon of Wilts, Chancellor of the Diocese
of Sarum, and late Preacher to the Honourable
Society of Gray's-Inn.

V O L. II.



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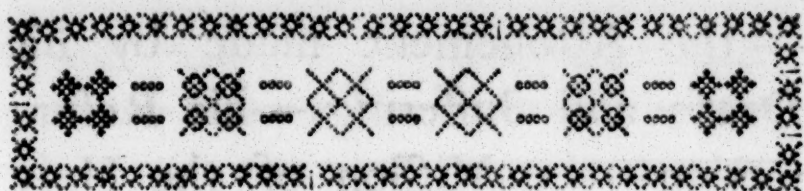
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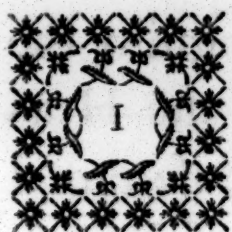
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P R E F A C E.



H A V E given to these Discourses, the Title of Sermons on PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY ; to intimate to the Reader, that my Design in collecting them, was not to put into his Hands a System of mere natural Religion ; but to treat of natural Religion, as it stands connected with the Hopes administered by the Gospel. For this Reason I judged it necessary to intersperse *some* which are of the THEOLOGICAL Kind ; such, for Instance, as concern Christ's divine Mission,

—the Attonement made by his Death and Sufferings—his Resurrection—the Mission of the Holy Ghost to be our Guide and Comforter—the Ascension of Christ into Heaven, to be our Mediator, and (hereafter) our Judge. These are the Points, that distinguish the Christian Preacher from the Heathen Moralist; and he whose moral Behaviour is actuated by these Principles, is the PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN.

Christianity has the same Relation to Man under the Guidance of natural Religion *only*; as Physick has to a distempered Constitution of Body. He that is sick and will not make Use of the proper Remedy dies without Pity: And he who trusting to the Remedy, shall neglect the natural Means of preserving Life, renounces
common

common Sense. There are Examples of both Sorts: For whilst some are setting up natural Religion, as alone sufficient to cure its own Disorders; others boast of, I know not what enthusiastick Faith (seemingly at least) in Disparagement of a good moral Life, which is the natural Food and Nourishment of the Soul.

I know that there are a great many Books (Sermons as well as others) extant upon these Subjects; and I am so far pleased, that there are, as not to be ashamed of adding to their Number. For it is here, as it is at a Feast, where, amidst a great Variety, it is probable, that every Man will find something that may suit his Palate. Some of our best Books are neglected only because they are old. The World

affects new Things; new Books as well as new Cloaths; and as every one dresses, so every one writes, according to his own Taste, in which if he is not so happy as to please every Body, he may please a few: And if these Sermons, intended to promote Sobriety, Honesty, Religion and Piety towards God, and Peace and Good-will among Men, may be of Use *though but to a few*---It is well. My sincere Endeavours, I hope, will, at least, be accepted; and the Publick receive with Candour, what I offer, as the last Tribute of my Services, that I shall ever be able to pay.

Wide is the Waste that has been made among us by Vice and Irreligion; and it may be Vanity in me to think, that my small Force will do any Thing towards stopping the
Torrent

Torrent that is broken in upon us, and threatens to overwhelm us. Leaving this (where it should be left) to H^IM who governs the World, and in whose Hands are the Hearts of Men; my Comfort is, that I am employed in the proper Business of my Profession, according to the Station appointed me in the Church; in which, living, I have done my best, and in which I desire to die.

March 28, 1760.



Torrent that is broken in upon
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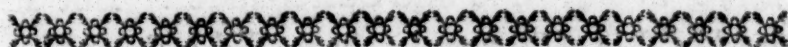
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Pag. 37. line 12. for *Impression*, read *Imperfection*. p. 55. l. 9. for *of*, r. *upon*. p. 63. l. 3. (from the bottom) for *deserved*, r. *deserve*. p. 68. last line but one, for *distinguisbed*, r. *distinguish*. p. 100. l. 5. (from the bottom) for *be that*, r. *that be*. p. 150. l. 5. (from the bottom) for *Evidences*, r. *Evidence*. p. 161. l. 1. dele *justly*. p. 263. l. 12. for *Direction*, r. *Discretions*. p. 416. last line, for *of*, r. *from*.



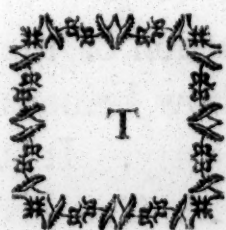
S E R M O N I.

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I PETER iv. 15.

----- *Let none of you suffer as a Murderer,
or as a Thief.*



H E Security of the natural Rights and Properties of Men, is the first Object of civil Society, and one of the principal Points in natural Religion. *Render to all their Dues*, is the voice of Nature. The Gospel introduces nothing new upon this Subject ; but only confirms by its Authority what Nature teaches. Therefore what I have to say upon it must be deduced from Natural Principles.

Many

B

Many curious Questions have been raised about the Origin of Property, with which it is not my Purpose to trouble you. It will be enough for me to say, that God is the Fountain of all Property, as he is the Maker and Lord of all Things. All we have we receive as his Gift. Our Life; our Limbs; and the several Creatures which serve to our Use and Sustenance: But all under his Controul, and Subject to his Authority. What God giveth, it must be presumed to be his Will that we enjoy; and the wise ends of his Providence, in making and governing the World, cannot otherwise stand; for an universal Neglect of Property, would be the Destruction of the Human Race: Which shews how heinous an Offence it is to invade Property. It is nothing less than disputing with God his Sovereign Dominion.

The first and the nearest Property which a Man has is his *Life*; and subordinate to this, is every Thing that ministers to the Support and Comfort of Life. No Man has a Right to take away another's Life, except it be necessary in his own Defence; which Exception must be admitted, because a Right to Life is not to be understood,
with-

without a Right to defend it against all Invaders. And since this is the only Plea, that can justify the taking away another's Life in ordinary Cases, it will be necessary to consider how far this Right extends; or in what Cases it may justly be pleaded that a Man kills in his own Defence.

How the Right of Self-Defence stands *out* of Society, it is no easy Matter to shew in all Cases, nor would it be of any great Use. We all live under Government; and it is happy for us that we do. For Government settles that upon a clear Foot, which would otherwise cause infinite Disorders in Human Life. Every Member of Society as such must be understood as having made a voluntary Cession of his natural Right of Self-Defence, into the Hands of the Magistrate, as the common Arbitrator: Which Cession, so far as it goes, stands as a Bar against all private Methods of Redress. Now there is but one Case in which the Laws of Society leave the Right of Self-Defence open to private Use; and that is when Force is applied, and the Law cannot interpose to yield the proper Remedy. For Instance: If a Man assaults me upon the Highway, or in the open Field, where no

Help is to be had, with Intention to maim me, or to take away my Life, I may justify killing him by the Law of Self-Defence. So it is if he attempts to rob me, and I cannot otherwise secure my Money or my Goods. The Reason is : The Law can lend no help in such Cases. For there is no Force at hand to seize the Aggressor, and prevent the Mischief he intends me ; and if I lose my Life or my Limbs, the Law cannot give me them back again. And though it is true that if a Man robs me of my Money or my Goods, there may be a possibility of recovering them by Law ; yet since actual Possession, is a Man's best Security ; and the intention of the Law is, not to make Men less secure in their Property, but, more so ; therefore the Law ties up no ones Hands, so as to oblige him to deliver up his Possession, so long as he can keep it. But if the Thief robs me and escapes, I may as well remedy myself by Law, as without Law, and commonly much better. Here therefore the Right of Self-Defence expires ; and Justice rests no longer in private Hands, but, in the Hands of the Magistrate.

From

From this Account we may perceive that there are three things necessary to support the Plea of Self-Defence. ---- There must be some Right to be defended. ---- There must be some Force to be resisted. --- There must be no Safety without killing. ---- If by avoiding a Man that assaults me I can prevent Bloodshed, I am bound to do it. Killing in such a Case is not necessary to my own Preservation. If a Man privately steals my Money or my Goods, of whatever value the Loss may be, it will not justify killing. The Law gives Remedy in such Cases. Finally; if I use Violence not in Defence of Right, but to the Obstruction of Law and Justice, and Blood is shed; I am myself the Aggressor, and God will require it at my Hands.

This may competently serve to explain in ordinary Cases the Nature of the Sin of Murder, which consists precisely in this, that it is taking away the Life of a Man when the Law of Self-Defence does not make it necessary. Or you may state it otherwise, more generlly thus; that it is taking away Life without Authority from God, who is the sole Author and Disposer of Life; and I should rather chuse this Way of stating it, because it takes in all

Cases, extraordinary as well as ordinary. Where the Law of Self-Defence may be pleaded, he that takes away the Life of another has God's Authority for it: So has the Magistrate when he takes away the Life of an Offender; for Government is God's Ordinance; and the Act of the Magistrate is the Act of God. But he who takes away Life when no such Necessity urges, has not God's Authority; I mean, not his ordinary Authority; for, no doubt, by Special Command God may authorize one Man to kill another, whether Self-Defence makes it necessary or not; of which several Examples might be produced out of Holy Writ. But this is not to my present Purpose.

To make the Act of Killing, Murder; the proper Circumstances must concur to make the Act imputable. But as there is nothing in these in which the Act of Killing is concerned more than in all other Human Actions; I do not think fit to enter into these Particulars. I shall rather chuse to exhort you to consider the Heinousness of this Offence. I have before observed that all Invasions of Property, are a Defiance of God's Sovereign Dominion. But
Murder

Murder is an Insult upon the very Person of his REPRESENTATIVE : For such (and Nature speaks it as well as Scripture) Man is. *Let us make Man* (says God) *in our own Image, after our Likeness, and let them have Dominion over the Fish of the Sea, and over the Fowl of the Air, and over the Cattle, and over every creeping Thing that creepeth upon the Earth.* Gen. i. 26. So that the universal Destruction of Man, would in Effect be the Destruction of this whole Creation ; and he that kills a Man (so far as the Act goes) destroys God's Work ; which is doing that in the natural World that the Devil does in the moral ; whose Enmity when our Saviour would describe he calls him nothing worse than a *Murderer*. John viii. 44. Here it is that the Sin of Murder principally lies, as appears from the first Prohibition of it in Scripture. *Surely your Blood of your Lives will I require ; at the Hand of every Beast will I require it, and at the Hand of Man. At the Hand of every Man's Brother will I require the Life of Man. Whoso sheddeth Man's Blood, by Man shall his Blood be shed, for in the Image of God made he Man.* Gen. ix. 5, 6. The Law you see, is expressly founded

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upon this Reason, that Man bears the Image of God ; in Consequence of which every Attempt upon the Life of a Man, is an Attempt against God. There is not only a Dignity and Value in the Life of a Man, above the Life of any other Creature, arising from the Excellency of his Nature, but even a Sacredness from the Relation he bears to God as his Image ; which is the Reason why under the Law, the Beast that should kill a Man was to be slain. It is not to be supposed that there is properly any Offence or Crime in a Brute Creature, for which Death was inflicted under the Notion of Punishment ; but it was to shew that the Life of Man was a Sacred * Thing ; as when God sanctified Mount Sinai, for the Place of his more immediate Abode, it was ordered in like Manner. *Thou shalt set Bounds to the People round about it, saying, take heed to yourselves that ye go not up into the Mount, or touch the Border of it ; whosoever toucheth the Mount shall surely be put to Death ; whether it be Beast or Man it shall not live.* Ex. xix. 12, 13. Even so the Sacred Image of God, which he hath stamped

* See Boyle's Lecture. Page 106.

stamped upon Man, is as it were a Hedge about him, that no unhallowed Hand should touch his Life; and all are unhallowed Hands who have not God's Call and Commission, that is (ordinarily) all who kill except it be in order to save.

These Considerations shew the Heinousness of Murder. It is not simply an Act of Disobedience; but it is Treason against Heaven; which hath in it so much the more of Malignity, as it hath more of Effect than any other Sin which Man can commit against Man. If a Man be hurt in any other Branch of his Property, he may yet be able to go on in his Calling, and to serve the Ends of God's Providence in the Station assigned him: But when a Man is killed, he is absolutely lost both to God and Man, so far as this World is concerned. And well it is if it does not reach the next. I do not think it in the Power of any Creature to hurt a good Man; but there may be Hurt enough done to bad ones; and it may be perhaps infinitely the greater Part of the Mischief, that they are sent unprepared before the Presence of their great Judge, and those Days cut off from Life, in which
much

much might have been done towards working out their Salvation, and reconciling themselves to God by true Repentance. This is a most sad Reflexion! That he who hath killed the Body, may, for ought that he can tell, have killed the Soul too, and sent both Soul and Body to Hell.

Another Sort of Property is that which a Man has in his *Money* or his *Goods*; which he holds by the same Tenure. For a Man's Substance is as much God's Gift to him as his Life or his Limbs, though it comes not to him in the same way. Our Life we receive immediately from God; but what is necessary to the Support or Comfort of Life we must provide for ourselves by the Means which he hath appointed. He gives the Means; but the Use and Efficacy of those Means is left to depend upon our own Industry. Since then God hath made it the Law of our Beings, that we must use Industry to the Supply of our Wants, there can be no plainer Consequence than this, that it is his Will that what we have obtained by our Industry, we should be suffered quietly to enjoy. It is certain that every Man cannot have the Use and Enjoyment of every Thing. The Food
that

that sustains me, and the Raiment that keeps me warm, cannot be the Food and Raiment of another and mine too. Some Rule then there must be to determine whose they are; and what stronger Reason can be given to shew that they are mine, than, that they are the Fruit of mine not of another's Industry?

It is easy to see that the Value of this kind of Property, in a gross way of Rekening, is equivalent to the Value of Life, for it is the Sustenance of it; which shews how offensive all Sorts of Encroachments upon it must be both to God and Man. There are various Ways of doing it. The Text mentions but one, which is *Theft*; and to this I shall at present confine myself.

Theft, is when one Man takes to his own Use, the Money or Goods of another *without Treaty*, which whether it be done by open Force, or by a clandestine Seizure, it makes no Difference. Nor is there (perhaps) any other Difference between him that steals little, and him that steals much than this, that the one plays the Rogue for lower Gains than the other. Human Laws make a Distinction in these Cases; for the Law considers Theft not merely as

a Sin against God, but as an Act hurtful to Society; and Reason good, that where the Mischief is greater, the Punishment should be greater. Government is more concerned to prevent great Mischiefs than small ones; and greater Punishments carry with them greater Terror. But in Conscience, I conceive there is little room for Distinction; because the Motive to steal being a Thirst of Gain, it may be presumed that the little Thief would more readily be a great one if he had the same Opportunity. Did you ever know a Man that stole a single Shilling, who would not as readily have stolen twenty? Thieves never carve with Conscience. They come prepared for all they can lay their Hands on; and if they attempt no great Matter, it is perhaps because they have less Courage and Dexterity, not because they have more Honesty. Pilferers have not yet learn't their Trade; but they have the Mind, they have the Spirit, of the most accomplished Villains.

The Apostle rightly joins Murder and Theft together; for the last naturally makes way for the first. When this happens, or when great Losses of any kind are sustained, Justice is watchful and follows close at the Offender

Offender's Heels; and if it lays hold of him the Punishment is severe. These Things make Men shy and timorous at first setting out. But let them have a Care. These Fears (which are their best Security) will wear off as they grow more practised. Habit and Impunity naturally make Men bold. He that has escaped once, is very apt to presume that he may escape a second or a third time, and so on; and when he has been successful in small Adventures, his Fingers will presently be itching after higher Game. It is thus that Men are led on by Degrees from lesser Trespases to greater; and from picking of Pockets come to breaking open Houses and cutting of Throats.

There is one obvious Use that Parents should make of this, which is, never to suffer their Children in pilfering Tricks, but to correct in them the first Appearances of Dishonesty. Children have Sense enough to discern what is Right; if those who have the Government of them will take a little Pains to shew it them. But you may, if you please, as easily bring up your Child to be a Thief, as you may teach him an honest Trade. Examples are but too common:

mon: And the Consequence is, that when a Child is thus educated, no Man that has any regard to himself, will or can have any thing to do with him. The first Family that takes him in will turn him out again; and he will be forced to pick up his Bread as he is able, which you may be sure will be in no honest Way. And, pray consider what a Condition a Man is in who has no way of Living but upon the Spoils of others! Suppose he takes to the High Way. In setting out a Thief he is a Murderer by Profession; for though no Murder be committed he carries with him the Will and Intention to kill, if it should be necessary to his own Safety: In all which he offers Violence to himself as well as to his Neighbour. There are some Bowels, some Sparks of Humanity in the worst of Men; and how must it gall the tender Passions of Nature, when like a savage Beast he is seizing upon his Fellow-creatures; dipping his Hands, perhaps, in innocent Blood, and sweeping away at one cruel Grasp, the Fruits of long Industry, the Support and Sustenance of whole Families! Of all Drudges a Robber is the greatest. Money he gets at the Peril of his Life; but it
passe

passes through his Hands as Water does through a Pipe, without leaving any durable Signs or Tokens that it was ever there. He plunders, but it is in order to be again plundered. Enjoyment there can be none, whilst the Rod of Justice is perpetually hanging over his Head ready to strike, and *a Fugitive and a Vagabond upon the Face of the Earth*, he is afraid that *every one* that meets him should *slay him*. Under these Fears, he lurks about in secret Places, among those who privy to his Crimes, will take a handle from the Disadvantages of his Situation, to squeeze him of his ill-gotten Treasure. And in the lower and more private ways of stealing the Gains hardly ever answer Men's Expectations. For did ever any one grow rich by pilfering? If a Man has the good Luck not to be discovered and brought to Justice (in which the Odds are greatly against him) he may get enough perhaps to maintain him in a lazy, beggarly Way; under the perpetual Jealousies of his own Mind, and the Suspicions and Ill-will of his Neighbours. How much better is it to work hard and live honestly! which will turn at least to

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as good an Account, and gain a Man Peace and Credit into the Bargain.

When the Hands of Justice lay hold upon such Offenders as these, there is at once an End of all their Hopes; and this is commonly very soon. For *the triumphing of the Wicked is but short, and his Joy but for a Moment.* Job xx. 5. which is in a particular Manner true of those who set themselves up in Defiance of public Laws, and sin with a high Hand. A very few Years, at most, brings them to the Gallows, and leaves them to the more severe and dreadful Judgment of God. If a Man could promise himself *length of Days*, with *Riches and Honour*, and whatever else it may be that courts Flesh and Blood, and be accursed at the last, what would it profit him? But to live in a perpetual Debauch, without Hope either in God or Man, or any one rational Enjoyment; and at last to be made *a Spectacle to the World*, this is a most hideous Prospect to all who are capable of Reflexion. No Man would wish such a Life as this to be long, if the Conclusion of it did not open to him a new Scene of Woes, infinitely more astonishing.

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It is to be presumed therefore that those who are actually engaged in this wicked Trade of Life, are got past Reflexion. Do I then hope to be heard by such? No: nor am I speaking to any such. But it may afford Matter of useful Observation to us all. In the first Place we may learn, that it will be much less to the Purpose, to provide our Children with plentiful Fortunes, than to cultivate in them the Principles of Virtue and Honesty. Moderate Fortunes with Sobriety and Industry will do: But a great Estate may be run through as well as a small one, when want of Virtue lets us loose into vicious Courses. Experience verifies this in Multitudes of unhappy Instances. Now what is it that makes Thieves? Necessity not Choice, as hundreds of them will tell you; and I can easily believe that no Man would steal unless Necessity drove him to it; there is that in it so offensive to every thing in us that is humane. But to this we may apply the common Saying, *Necessity has no Law*, not to excuse the Practice (which nothing can excuse) but to account in some Sort for the Frequency of it. Robbing, it is true, is a

dangerous Trade; but it mortifies some Men's Pride much less than the Means they must otherwise submit to. Death is the worst Consequence; and Death, as it is the last of all Terrors, so it may be the least to bad Men. How many are there who would rather chuse to die even with Infamy, than to work for a Livelihood?

There are therefore scarce any Advantages of Fortunes which can put us absolutely out of the Reach of Danger in this Case, without a sober and a prudent Mind. And the higher in Life we stand, our Fall will be so much the more dangerous. When a poor Man has wasted his little Stock, and is forced to submit to hard Labour to get him Bread, he is sensible of no great Change. His Necessities bring him pretty near the same Point where his Vices found him. At least it is no Disparagement to him, to apply himself to some industrious Way of getting himself a Livelihood; for it is what he was born to, and what he has been accustomed to. But when those who have been bred up in Ease and Delicacy, with the Affluence of all Things; who have been honoured among their Neighbours, and taught to entertain

certain high Notions of themselves; when such as these, I say, come to Poverty; Necessity drives them hard indeed! Their Hands are too soft to work; their Hearts are too stout to ask; or if they have Friends that are willing to assist them they may not have left it in their Power to do it in any such Way, as will make their Conditions easy to them. What have they then to do but to stand the last Chance, and to try by some desperate Adventure either to retrieve a lost Game, or to give up all Hopes and all Fears for ever?

I am not aggravating Things beyond Reason, nor do I speak without Experience to justify what I say. For who are they that trouble the High-Ways but Men whose Necessities have made them desperate; most of them perhaps of the lowest Class, but many of them born to liberal Fortunes; such as would have enabled them to have made a reputable Figure in the Commonwealth, if they had had Discretion enough to have used them properly? And therefore the next Instruction that every Man is to learn for himself hence is, cautiously to avoid those expensive Vices which draw on Necessity, and disqualify them

them to make a suitable Provision for themselves, by some honest and laudable Employment. It greatly recommends it to the Prudence of Men to chuse for themselves some honest Occupation, even when there is no other need of it, than that it cuts off many of those Occasions that lead to evil Courses. But when Men *must* take to some Calling, or want the Comforts and Conveniencies of Life; for such as these to run into destructive or unprofitable Ways, to the Neglect of that which ought to be their Employment, is little less than Distraction. The longest Line has an End, but most Men's Fortunes are soon spent; and when honest Means fail, what their Wants may at last drive them to, there is nobody can tell. Stealing, no Doubt, is the last Thing they will think of, as it is what every Man must abhor so long as he has any Reason left. But they are drawn into it by Degrees; for as they grow hardened in their Sins the Sense of moral Honesty decays, till at last they quite lay aside their Humanity, and contract a brutish and savage Nature; and then all Actions come alike to them. There is no Man who lets himself loose to Vice, that does not fall in-

to bad Company; and *there* he will meet with evil Counsellors enough, who will be ready to lend a helping Hand to stifle the dying Remains of Virtue, and to spirit him up to the most bold and desperate Attempts. Some kind of Excesses heat Men's Spirits and make them mad. Others keep them bound as it were with Chains, and make them Drudges and Slaves to the most abandoned and profligate. What may not a Man be prompted to (I was going to ask, what *must* he not submit to) who is become a Slave to a wicked Woman, who has no Bowels for any one but herself, and thinks of nothing but what ministers to her Avarice and Lust? "No Money, thou Fool, "thou Coward; hast thou not Hands? "Begone. Unlock thy Master's Chest. "Enter secretly into thy wealthy Neighbour's House; and there thou shalt find "Treasures." Hard Work! But it must be done if thou art not thy own Master; but her Vassal. And what is it to her if instead of loading thy self with Spoil, thou art dragged away to a Dungeon, and loaded with Chains? She wants thee not; she pities thee not!

When Men are thus hampered in their Sins, good Advice comes too late; and therefore take Warning (young Men) betimes, and accustom yourselves to Temperance, Frugality and an industrious Way of spending your Time. You will find your Account in it, both in the present Satisfaction such a Life will yield, and in your future Expectations.

It is nothing that leads Men into bad Ways, but want of Thought and Consideration to attend to the Effects and Consequences of Things. They find a Pleasure in gratifying Appetite, but they do not compute how much that Pleasure will cost them. And yet there is scarce an Act of Excess which does not give them fair Notice. At first setting out, they have to struggle with natural Shame and Modesty, and the Rebukes of Conscience, which fill the Mind with perpetual Jealousy and Discontent. When they have conquered these (as conquered, no doubt, they may be) there are greater Difficulties yet to come. For their Vices now make high Demands, and they have not perhaps wherewith to satisfy them; or if they have, in proportion as their Substance wastes, the
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certain Prospect of an infamous Poverty opens itself yet more wide upon them. But when a Man can govern his Appetites, and follows his Calling with Honesty and Industry; as all is easy within, so there is nothing from without that can give him Disturbance. The early Fruits of his Industry are a Pledge in Hand for better Things to come, and every thriving, honest Family which he sees about him, stands as a Pledge of his future Fortunes.





S E R M O N II.



ECCLESIASTES v. 8.

If there be Oppression of the Poor, and violent perverting of Justice and Judgment. He that is higher than the highest regardeth.

O P P R E S S I O N is Injustice in the Eye of the natural Law ; and differs little from Robbery. But it escapes the Censure of Human Laws, and acts frequently even under their Cover and Protection. And certainly there is not a worse Instrument of Injustice, than the Law itself perverted to an unnatural Use. The natural Use of the Law is the Security of Right ; and the Law therefore is properly appealed to in every righteous Cause, or in every Cause which a Man honestly believes or hopes to be such. But when a Demand

Demand is made which a Man in his own Conscience knows to be unjust, and a Compliance is forced by threatening or commencing a Law Suit, it is Oppression. The Law cannot punish it as Robbery; for the Law is the Instrument of the Iniquity. But in Conscience it is one and the same Thing. When one Man claps a Pistol to another's Breast, and bids him deliver; what has the Person assaulted to complain of? Why that against all Justice he is forced to deliver up his Money, or to suffer a worse Evil. So it is in the other Case. The Thief says deliver or be killed: The Oppressor, pay or be undone. In both Cases there is an unlawful Force, with this Distinction only; that in the first Case, the force it self is unlawful; in the second, a lawful Force is applied unlawfully.

It is commonly said that the Law is open to every Body; which is in this Sense true, that the Law itself discourages no Man from making Use of it. The Reason is because the Law knows no Man's Right till it comes to try it. But if the Law knows no Man's Right till it tries it, a Man may know his own Right; and when he does, Honesty

neſty and a good Conſcience, will forbid him to make uſe of the Law, or the Terrors of it, in Maintenance of wrong. The Inſtrumentality of the Law in this Caſe, doth not leſſen the Malignity of the Offence, but rather aggravates it. For when a Man takes away my Property in defiance of the Law, he leaves me to the Law as to my natural Remedy. But he that does the ſame Thing under the Shelter of the Law, leaves me abſolutely without Remedy. For in that Caſe the Law itſelf becomes the Grievance, and other Remedy there is none.

It is the ſame Thing when a Man holds out againſt a juſt Debt, and refuſes Payment becauſe the Creditor is not able to contend with him, or muſt put himſelf to a great deal more Expence than the Thing is worth. There are many who in ſuch a Caſe, will chuſe rather to ſubmit to the wrong then take the Remedy; and in ſome Inſtances it may be adviſeable ſo to do. But it is Robbery (or ſomething equivalent) in him who againſt Right and Conſcience lays his Neighbour under this Neceſſity. For all extorting Money by unlawful Force is Robbery; and putting a Man under an
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unlawful Necessity is applying an unlawful Force. So it is when in Disputes about Property, Judgment is perverted by evil Methods, as suborning Witnesses, corrupting Juries, and the like. For Judgments so obtained, are not Decisions of Right, but Usurpations of it. So that if there is Force in such Cases, it must be an unlawful Force; and Force there always is: For the Law which gives the Sentence will see to the Execution. But to whom is this Force to be imputed? Plainly not to the Law (which proceeds upon the Presumption of Right) but to him who fraudulently obtains the Aid of the Law, to help him in an unjust Cause. As when one Man borrows a Weapon, with which he kills another; the violent Act is to be charged upon him that uses the Instrument, not upon him who innocently lends it.

To mention one Case more, which is not an uncommon one. All Prosecutions at Law, which are intended *only* to run Men to Expence, are Oppression. If a Man suffers a Trespass, and a Satisfaction is offered, which in his own Judgment he knows to be a reasonable one, he is in Conscience bound to accept it; and if he pro-
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secutes he robs his Neighbour of so much Money as the Charge of the Law-Suit exceeds the Satisfaction offered. For what will the Law if honestly pursued yield more to you than a reasonable Satisfaction? If then you have your Remedy without the Law; you compel your Neighbour to bear the Expences of the Law without a justifiable Cause, that is, you apply an unlawful Force to squeeze him of so much Money. Offences of this kind are so much the less excuseable, because a Man hurts his Neighbour commonly at his own Cost; for which he can have no Compensation besides the low Satisfaction of gratifying an envious or a malicious Mind. And it should be remarked upon this and all the Abuses before mentioned, that they are not only Injuries to particular Persons, but Offences against Society in general, and above all an Indignity offered to that high Authority, by whose Ordinance *Kings reign, and Rulers decree Justice*. Society, and the publick Administration of Laws, were intended for the general Good of Mankind; but when Laws are perverted from their natural End, and instead of being the Security of Men's Properties, are made the
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Tools of Injustice; so far as the Abuse goes it leaves Mankind in a worse Condition than they would be in if there were no Law or Government at all, but every Man was left to do what is right in his own Eyes. For in this Case a Man might possibly find out the Means to redress his own Wrongs, which, in the other, Law and Government will not permit him to do. ----- But to proceed,

Another Instrument of Oppression, is *exorbitant Usury*. Some have gone so far as to condemn all Increase upon lending Money as unlawful; and we know that the Jews were forbidden to take it of their poor Brethren, as it is, *Exod. xxii. 25. If thou lend Money to any of my People that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an Usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him Usury. And Lev. xxv. 35. 36. If thy Brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him, yea, though he be a Stranger, and a Sojourner that he may live with thee. Take thou no Usury of him, or increase.* I suppose that a good Christian would think himself bound to a like Conduct in like Cases, in virtue of that Precept of our Saviour. *Luke vi. 35. Love your*

your Enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again. ----- Be merciful as your Father is merciful. But there is a great Difference between lending Money to those who are the Objects of our Charity; and lending it to others who are of Abilities to live, and in a way to make an Advantage of our Money by Trading. It may well be presumed that our Saviour did not intend to read to us a Lesson of Injustice, when, in the Parable of the Talents recorded, Matt. xxv. He represented the Master as chiding his unthrifty Servant, because he had not *put his Money to the Exchangers, that at his coming he might have received his own with Usury.* Ver. 27. And upon the Reason of the Case, give me leave to ask; why is it not as lawful to take Interest for Money as Rent for Lands? What is Rent but an Interest for the Use of the Estate of which the Occupier is supposed to make a reasonable Advantage? But this reasoning will direct us to one material Conclusion, which is, that the Rate of Interest for Money is not a mere arbitrary discretionary Thing, but bears some natural Proportion to the Advantage which the Borrower may be presumed to make of

it by Commerce; in like Manner as there is a natural Proportion between the just Rent of an Estate, and the Produce of the Land by Tillage. If a Man hires Land there ought to be that Difference between the Rent and the Produce, as will pay him for his Labour and Skill, and the Expences he is at in Ploughing, Sowing, and the like, otherwise the Farmer cannot live. So it should be in borrowing Money. For if the Borrower gives the Lender as much as the Money will produce in Trade, he gives his Labour and Skill for nothing. Some natural Proportion therefore between just Interest and the Produce of the Money, there is and must be; and what this is Use and Experience in Business will always settle to a tolerable Exactness. When a Man knows what Advantage can be made of Money, he will know what he can afford to give for the Use of it, so as to live by his Occupation; and these Things admitting of no considerable Variety in any given Situation of the Publick Affairs, in a reasonable Way of Estimation, Mankind would naturally fix upon some general Standard by common Consent, if there was no Publick Laws determining the Rate of Interest. But in
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this Case there would be great Room for the Rich to make a Prey of the Poor. Many whose Necessities were urgent, would be tempted to give an unreasonable Interest for Money, rather than go without it; to the Ruin of their Families, and the great Hurt of Civil Society, the Safety of which very much depends upon a just Ballance of Property. Whether the Rich eat up the Poor, or the Poor the Rich, Society will feel it, and it is hard to say which is the worse Evil.

To prevent these Mischiefs is the Intention of the Law on this behalf; into which I thought it needful thus far to enter, because those who think Right and Wrong in this Case, to be a mere Creature of the Law, will be apt to pay very little Regard to it, if by any kind of Artifice, (and various are the Contrivances of Men sharpened by Covetousness) the Penalties of the Law may be avoided. But it appears from what I have said, that the Rate of Interest is not therefore reasonable because the Law appoints it; but the Law appoints it, because upon common Experience and Observation it is found to be reasonable; and what is a good Reason for making a Law,

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is undoubtedly as good a Reason for keeping it. Some perhaps may think it unreasonable that the Law should interpose in this Case; and ask, why may not a Man be left to make the best Interest he can get for his Money, as he is left to make the best Rent he can get for his Estate? There is this plain Difference in the Cases, that Lands are not reduceable to any certain Standard as Money is. Every Man knows what a Guinea is worth, and how much it will produce for the Uses of Life. But Laws can never settle how much an Acre every Man's Estate is worth, or what it will produce; otherwise there would be as much Reason why they should interpose to ascertain the Rent of Lands, as the Rate of Interest, and there would be very good Reason for both; for both no doubt may be made the Instruments of great Oppression. There is, as I have before observed, a natural Proportion between the just Rent of an Estate, and the Produce of the Land, which every knowing Person will see, and every just and honest Man will have regard to. But because there is no general Law to determine the *Quantum* in this Case (as indeed there can be none) therefore Men of covetous and

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narrow Minds are very apt to exceed their Bounds, and not consider that they are doing wrong to their Neighbour. But the Rate of Interest being settled by Law, to which every member of the Society, as such, is bound to submit, there is not the same room for self-deceit. He that goes beyond Law must go beyond Honesty.

But where (you will urge) is the wrong in the one Case, or in the other? If a Man likes not my Land or my Money, at the Price I set upon it, it is in his own Choice to let it alone. Can he be wronged by a Bargain of his own making? Yes. When a Man delivers up his Purse to a Thief upon the Highway; he bargains for his Life, and he pays for it too. Is he therefore not wronged? Yea; but here is Force. So there is in the other Case. The Man's Necessities or his Folly are the Force. The Highwayman it is true *makes* the Force; the Oppressor *finds* it. But how much will this Difference amount to, if either way the Mischief is equal? If one Man is resolved to hang another, little does it import whether he brings the Rope in his Pocket, or finds it ready about the poor Man's Neck! It is in all Cases a cruel Thing to take

take Advantage of the Necessities of the Poor, to draw them to our own Gain. An humane Man when he sees his Neighbour in Distress, will always feel a Disposition to assist him; and the Law of Nature binds him to it according to his Abilities. What a crossing of Nature then is it, and how wicked a Spirit does it shew, when a Man has already as much upon his Shoulders as he is able to bear, instead of making the Burden lighter to load him more!

I have thus very briefly explained the Sin of Oppression in its principal Branches. Give me leave now to make a few general Reflexions.

We may observe in the first Place, that this Sin hath a peculiar Correspondency to the State of the Rich, as Theft has to the State of the Poor. Every Man may steal that has the Will for it; but before a Man can oppress he must have Power; that is, he must have Wealth; for it is Wealth that is the common Engine of Oppression. But as poor Men cannot oppress, so neither will rich Men steal unless they are mad. They have too much to hazard. But they should consider that when they oppress they do the

same or as bad a Thing; for oppressing is stealing in a different Way and by different Instruments.

And as these Vices are the same in Nature and Kind, so they are in the Influence they have upon Civil Society. A poor Man is by his Condition born to labour, and when he discharges his Duty well he is a common Blessing; but if instead of using his natural Skill and Strength for the common Benefit, he applies them to the Hurt or Destruction of his fellow Creatures, better were it for Mankind if he had never been born. See you not the same Perversity, the same Malignity of the Offence, when rich Men grind and oppress the Poor, whom by the natural Law of their Creation they are bound to protect? If there is any Difference, I think that a rich over-grown Oppressor is a worse Enemy to Mankind than a Thief. Against a Thief there is some Defence. The Law is every Man's Protection; and when Justice lays hold on him, which it soon does, Society is rid of him at once. But he who evades, and much more, he who borrows Aid from the Law, to do iniquitous Things, puts himself out of the Reach of Justice, and must reign

reign as long as the Lot of his Mortality will suffer him. How long that may be it well behoves him to consider; for as Solomon observes in the Text, Eccles. v. 8. *If there be Oppression of the Poor, and violent perverting of Justice and Judgment--- He that is higher than the highest regardeth.* To be the Father of the Oppressed, is a Character under which God is often set forth to us in Scripture. At his Tribunal they shall find that Redress, which, through the Weakness and Impression of human Administrations, they cannot meet with here; and whilst the Wrongs which they have patiently suffered shall entitle them to a more abundant Recompence, the evil Deeds of their Oppressors will sink them deeper in Woes everlasting. *Who* (says our Saviour) *is that faithful and wise Steward whom his Lord shall make Ruler over his Household to give them their Portion of Meat in due Season? Blessed is that Servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing.---* But if that Servant say in his Heart, *my Lord delayeth his Coming, and shall begin to beat the Men-servants and Maidens --- The Lord of that Servant --- will cut him asunder, and appoint him his Portion with the Unbelievers.*

Hevers. Luke xii. 42, 46. Who are God's Stewards whom he hath made Rulers over his Household, but the Rich and Powerful? Who so fitly answer the Character of *Beaters* of God's Servants, as the Oppressors of Mankind? For such as these then a heavy Doom is prepared, as it is fit there should; least those who find no Superior on Earth, should boast that they have none in Heaven neither.

My next Observation is, that as Necessity drives poor Men to steal; so it is Covetousness (ordinarily) that tempts the Rich to oppress. And should not this Consideration, be as good a Reason to the Rich to use the proper Means, to check this greedy Appetite, as the other is to the Poor to cut off their expensive Vices? The less Money the poor Man has, the harder Necessity pinches, and the stronger is his Temptation to steal. The more Money the rich Man gets, the more his Thirst increases, and the stronger, of course, his Temptation to oppress. The Cases are exactly as if one Man should be over-run with Humours, another wasted with a Consumption. The first must seek his Remedy, in Abstinence and Evacuation; the last in
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stopping up those unnatural Drains, which defraud him of his proper Nourishment. But there is this material Difference in the two Cases. When the poor Man's Temptations to steal grow stronger, the Opportunities of doing it, are not therefore the more favourable. But as the rich Man grows more willing to oppress, he grows more able for it too. He grows more willing as he grows more covetous; he grows more covetous as Wealth more abounds; and the richer he is, the more his poor Neighbour lies at his Mercy.

This shews it to be a very difficult Thing to cure an oppressive Spirit, when once it is suffered to take Root in the Mind. When a Man steals he knows it is at the Peril of his Life, which ties up the Hands of Thousands, who would not abstain upon the mere Motive of Right and Justice. The Oppressor, placing himself above the Law, has no Check but from his own Conscience, and the natural Impressions of Humanity, which may be worn out by frequent Acts of Violence: And what is that Man not capable of who neither fears God, nor regards Man! As it is therefore in all Cases necessary, so it is more especi-

ally in this, to take care of the first beginnings, and never allow ourselves in any one Act at which Conscience starts, or which gives Offence to the tender Passions of Nature. Conscience and Nature are faithful Monitors, and upon the least Enchroachment upon our Neighbours Property will give us Notice. What if it goes a little against the Grain to follow their Admonitions? We can not be vertuous at no Expence. Self-denial in some Point or another there must be. What would you advise a Man to do who is given to Gluttony? Forbear obstinately. Eat not to the very utmost Line; but rise from Table with thy Appetite unsatisfied. The Advice is just as good if you are fond of Gain. Rather than hazard taking too much, take something too little; and since it is Fullness that increases your Thirst, discharge yourself of your Abundance, and when you are tempted to wrest from your poor Neighbour one Shilling, give him two. If rich Men would accustom themselves to Acts of Liberality, they would introduce a Habit that stands in direct Opposition to the Spirit of Covetousness; and if they coveted not what is their Neighbours, they would find

find themselves under no Temptation to oppress them. But if they indulge the Appetite of gathering, and make it a Rule to themselves in all Instances of their dealing to cut as close as they are able to go, they will grow Knaves before they think on it. One Act of Oppression will lead them on by easy Steps to another, till at last they grow insupportable to their Neighbours, and to themselves if ever God should open their Eyes to see their own Doings, and to consider of the Account they are to render unto him another Day. Men are very apt to put the Cheat upon themselves in such Cases, and to look upon themselves as innocent if they go no farther than the Law will bear them out. But it is a very true as well as common Observation, that a Man may be very bad who is no better than the Law will make him. Human Laws are intended to answer the purpose of human Government; and they will do it tolerably well in most Cases. But there are some Offences to which human Laws cannot reach, I mean so as to punish them; for I make no doubt but that he who under colour of Law contradicts the Spirit and Intention of the Law, is as much an Offender against Man as he is against God.

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S E R M O N III.

I T H E S S. iv. 3. 6,

This is the Will of God---that no Man go beyond and defraud his Brother in any Matter; because that the Lord is the Avenger of all such.

¶ F we consult the Original we shall find that the Words will admit this literal Interpretation. *Let no Man over-reach or defraud his Brother in Traffick or Commerce.* In which Light they will directly point out the Vice, which I purpose as the Subject of the present Discourse: I mean *Fraud*; which obtains that by Artifice and Cunning, that Theft or Oppression gets by Necessity and Force. To enter into the various Ways of cheating (best understood by those who practice them)

them) would be an endless Task: I shall therefore only observe in general, that the Bottom upon which all Traffic or Commerce rests, is this Maxim of common Sense, that Property cannot pass from one Man to another without the Owner's Consent. The Nature of every Contract supposes this Principle. For if you are not convinced that without your Neighbour's Consent, you can have no Right to his Goods, why do you treat with him? In all Transactions therefore, between Man and Man, we must consider how far Consent goes; for where Consent ends, there Injustice begins; and just so much as I take from another against his Will, just so much I take from him wrongfully.

To find out this, a very little Attention will suffice in many Cases. It is evident in the first Place, that Consent supposes the right Use of a Man's Reason; for it is the Act of a rational Mind. And therefore he that takes Advantage of his Neighbour when he is drunk, to draw him into hard Bargains, cheats him of his Money. It is the same thing in natural Folly or great Unskilfulness in Matters about which Men transact. It is a mean and a base Thing to
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take unreasonable Gains in such Cases; for the Consent bears Proportion to the Degrees of Knowledge a Man has, and goes no farther.

But the most common Operation of Fraud lies in some secret Defect in the Conditions upon which Contracts are made, and Consent is given. If a Man consents upon certain Terms only, it is plain that where the Condition fails the Consent dies; and whether the Condition be express or by Implication only it makes no Difference. If a Lord accepts from his Steward a Sum of Money in Discharge of his Trust, and the Steward has secreted any Part to his own private Use, he takes his Master's Money without his Consent: For the Lord accepted the Sum offered upon this Condition implied and understood, that it was the Whole of what was due to him. It is the same thing in all Sophistication of Goods; in all false Weights and Measures; in which Cases the Condition of the Bargain fails, and the Consent which hangs upon it naturally expires. The Buyer consents to give so much Money, for such a Quantity of Goods; the Seller delivers less. The Buyer again,
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contracts for Goods so or so conditioned; the Seller delivers another thing. These I mention as Examples only; for all Instances agree in this Respect. So that you see there is no Difference between Theft and Fraud as to the Nature and Malignity of the Crime. It is the same Offence done in a different Way, and by different Means. The Offence in both Cases is that a Man is treated as if his Property was not his Property; the only Difference is that the Cheat acts under the cover of a Treaty, the Thief without it. But if one robs me of twenty Pounds, and another cheats me of as much, it is plain that in either Case I am the same Sufferer.

There is one general Condition which is ordinarily supposed in all Commerce; and that is, that the Seller will be contented with a reasonable Profit, and sell at the Market-price; for no Man can be presumed willing to give more for a Commodity than it is worth. And yet there are many who will not submit to the grosser Acts of Fraud, who without Scruple will take exorbitant Gains. Perhaps it would be too severe to tax every Encroachment of this Sort as an Act of Injustice: For where
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we cannot draw the exact Line which divides Right from Wrong, there will be always room for a charitable Construction. Men may think that they take but a reasonable Profit, whilst they are taking more than is fit. But this can have place only in small Excesses. There is certainly *somewhere* a Distinction between reasonable and unreasonable Gains; which those who are versed in Business must be supposed competently to understand; and if they are endowed with honest Minds, and are moderate in their Pursuits after Riches they will not greatly err. But if instead of being content with a decent Livelihood suitable to the Condition they were born to, nothing less will satisfy them than raising Estates, and placing themselves above their Rank; this will be an Inlet to great Impositions; and the Question with such will be, not how much any Commodity is reasonably worth, but how much may be made of it. In such Cases as these there is but one short Rule to be given -- *Act as in the Sight of God*, to whose all-seeing Eye all Secrets are open. Men may not condemn us; Laws may not condemn us; but God will judge us, *who is the Avenger of all such Wrongs*

as these; and *that* is the Judgment we are most to be afraid of.

As Fraud may be committed against private Persons; so it may against publick Bodies or Communities. So St. Paul tells us, Rom. xiii. 7. *Render to all their Dues; Tribute to whom Tribute is due; Custom to whom Custom.* And so our Saviour, *Render to Cæsar the Things which are Cæsar's.* Matt. xxi. 21. Tribute and Custom are as much a Debt to the Publick, as the Price of Goods sold and delivered, is to any private Person, the Demand arising from a publick Contract, to which every Member of Society is virtually consenting. And therefore I could never learn a good Reason, why a Man who would be grievously offended if you should think him to be a Knave, should yet make no Conscience of cheating the Publick as much as he is able; the true plain Difference in the two Cases being only this, that he who commits a private Fraud, cheats a few, whilst he who cheats the Publick, cheats Thousands. Perhaps that which leads Men to make light of Offences of this Sort may be, that one may gather great Wealth to himself by cheating the Publick without much hurt

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to Individuals: But this is the case of almost all Frauds. The unfair Trader deals in small Gains, each Man's particular Share considered: They are High-way-men, House-breakers and Pick-pockets only who sweep by wholesale; in which there is more Cruelty, no doubt, but, perhaps, not less Honesty. But if you would see this Practice in its true Light you must take it with its Circumstances and Connections. Perjury leads the Way when the Fraud cannot be concealed without taking a false Oath; which often happens. Rebellion and Murder attend it in its Progress; when what is unjustly gotten cannot be maintained without Force employed against the civil Authority, which often happens too: To all which Crimes (and to all other Mischiefs that may follow in the Conclusion) every Man is more or less an Accessary, who encourages these Frauds, and makes himself a Sharer in the pullick Plunder.

And now, to offer something by way of Exhortation on these several Ways of invading Property. Much may be said to recommend fair Dealing upon the foot of worldly Prudence; as it raises a Character
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that will be of use in every Station of Life; but to those especially who have their Fortunes to make, or a Liveilhood to get, who will always stand in need of the Good-will of their Neighbours. And with whom had you rather be concerned? With him who observes a Conscience in his Dealings, or with him who will cheat you as much as he durst? In Reason therefore it should be every Man's Interest to deal honestly; and generally speaking it comes out so in Fact. Every Knave is an Adventurer. Sometimes he succeeds and grows rich by his Knavery; but often miscarries to his Destruction. Our Saviour has given us a lively Emblem of this in the Parable of the unjust Steward, recorded in the 16th Chapter of St. Luke. He was in the highest Post of Honour next to his Master, and might have been as happy as he could have wished, if he had known how to have been content. But when he cast his Eyes upon dishonest Gains, his Ruin hastened on apace. The Discovery of his Frauds cost him his whole Livelihood; and reduced him to a State of the vilest Dependance; to a Necessity of crouching

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for Bread to Men detestable as himself! Such Instances we frequently see in common Life. Men that make a reputable Figure in the World, and would be respected and esteemed if they could contain themselves within the Bounds of Honesty: But when their private Vices make them Knaves, their Knavery exposes them to Shame and Punishment. One bad Action draws on another. To retrieve the Mischiefs of a lesser Offence, they are driven on to commit greater; till at length they grow quite insupportable, and by one sad Reckoning pay dear at last for all their iniquitous Practices.

But what as Christians we should most regard is this, that the Time is coming, and may be near at hand, when this which makes so much Noise and Bustle in the World, and which we pursue with so much Thought and Care; this Idol which we worship with so much Devotion; will appear to us as vile as the Dirt of the Earth. *Riches profit not in the Day of Wrath*; says Solomon. Prov. xi. 4. The Day of *Wrath* is the Day of *the Revelation of God's righteous Judgment*, as it is Rom. ii. 5. the Time when God comes to punish wicked

wicked Men; to whose Justice the great and mighty must submit, as well as the poor and lowly. This Day sometimes hath its beginning in this World, when if God leaves to Men their Wealth, he leaves them not the Use and Enjoyment of it; but embitters their Days with Crosses and Disappointments, with pining Sicknes, or with racking Pains. What avails it to a Man in the Gout or Stone, how he is accoutred? Whether he groans in Silks or in coarse and homely Apparel? Whether he hath Honours and Titles, and can leave to his Heirs a great Estate, or simply the Means of an honest and comfortable Livelihood? There is in these Cases plainly no Difference between him who hath little, and him who possesseth the greatest Abundance. But Death, which closes our longest Reprieve, makes a great Change indeed; and opens to us a new Scene, where we shall see the Poor and the Honest lifted up to Thrones of Glory, whilst the hasty Gatherers of Wealth shall sit on the Dung-hill to feed on Husks and on Ashes! When this great Change comes near to us in Prospect; when Age or Sicknes shall admonish us, that we have well nigh finished

our Course; when we shall see this World shaking her gaudy Plumes as just upon the Flight to leave us; what Sentiments shall we feel? We, I say, who believe in Christ, and *have Hope towards God that there shall be a Resurrection both of the Just and the Unjust?* Shall we think it of any Consequence to us *then*, that we have heaped up Wealth not for ourselves, but to be gathered by we know not whom; or shall we not rather wish to part with it all, if it could purchase for us that Peace of Mind which the righteous Man feels, when he lays his Hand upon his Heart, and sets all Mankind at Defiance, saying, in the Words of good old Samuel, *Behold! here I am; witness against me before the Lord --- Whose Ox have I taken, or whose Ass have I taken; or whom have I defrauded; whom have I oppressed?* 1 Sam. xii. 3.

There is one Species of natural Justice yet behind, which should not be omitted. It concerns neither Mens Lives nor their Goods, but their Persons and Characters considered as distinguished by their Situations in Life; which give them a Right to a certain Manner of Behaviour from others, the Denial of which comes under the Notion

on of Fraud or Robbery. St. Paul puts this in mind of this in the Passage above cited; when after having said, *render to all their Dues; Tribute to whom Tribute is due; Custom to whom Custom is due; --- he adds, Fear to whom Fear; Honour to whom Honour.* The Conditions of Men are distinguished by their Authority, by their Wealth, or by both. Authority draws Obedience after it as its natural Debt, as the Apostle further enforceth, Tit. iii. 1. and Tim. ii. 2. *Put them in mind to be subject to Principalities and Powers; to obey Magistrates --- and all that are in Authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable Life, in all Godliness and Honesty.* The End of Government is publick Peace and Quietness; which will always be promoted in Proportion as the Laws of Society are observed: Whereas the Contempt of publick Authority, opens the Way to Violations of all Kinds of Property. Property is secured by Law and Government; and these are founded in Authority and Subordination; a Contempt of which, is, in Effect, a Dissolution of Society. Authority, indeed, carries with it Power to support itself, by inflicting Punishment upon those who transgress the

Laws, as the Apostle intimates at the 4th Verse of this Chapter, where speaking of the civil Power he saith; *If thou do that which is evil be afraid, for he beareth not the Sword in vain; for he is the Minister of God, a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doeth Evil.* This is the Reason why the Apostle expresseth that Duty which we owe to Authority by the word *Fear*, because the Terrors of the Law are the Security of Government, and with too many it may be apprehended, the main Spring of their Obedience. But if we would act like Christians, we should look up to a higher Authority, as the Apostle tells us in the next Verse: *Wherefore ye must needs be subject not only for Wrath but also for Conscience sake.* It is in all Instances true, that Justice as a Religious Act takes its Nature from the Principle from whence it springs. If a Man obeys merely through the Dread of the Law, this is Policy not Religion. Nor is Government ever safe under such a Conduct as this. For Commonwealths are not near so often undone, by open and presumptuous Violations of the Law, as by secret and cautious Practices which Punishment cannot reach. Enterprizing and art-
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ful Men may do more Mischief, by bad Counsels, rash Censures, unfriendly Insinuations, or seditious Invectives, than declared Enemies or Traitors can by direct and formal Attempts against Government: And therefore these are Things, which every good Man will conscientiously avoid. They must be very flagrant Abuses of Trust, and dangerous Encroachments of civil Right, that will justify *speaking evil of Dignities*; because it is always more for the Safety of the Whole to bear small Grievances, than to attempt great Changes, which are seldom brought about without Shocks and Convulsions, worse than the Mischiefs they are intended to cure. No human Government is in all Respects perfect; and to take fire upon every little Mismanagement, is the way never to be at rest; besides that, there is commonly in such Cases room for Errors of Judgment on the one side, as well as Errors in Conduct on the other.

As Submission is due to Authority, so there is a Respect due to every Man whether in Authority or not in Authority, suitable to his Birth and Fortunes. Persons that stand thus distinguished in Life, if they behave as they should do, are great Bene-

factors to Mankind; in which View they have an equitable Claim from Mankind to be treated with Respect and Honour. And if great Men do not always act like themselves, it is certain that their Inferiors are not the proper Persons to sit as Judges over them, and decide upon their Merit. We ought not to excuse, much less to commend the Vices of our Betters; but there is a Respect due to their Persons, that should always secure them from rude and insolent Behaviour; which is not the less faulty in us, because we see, or think we see, Faults in those to whom we so demean ourselves. There is a Manner of Address; a Propriety of Deportment, with respect to Persons of this or that Condition, which Custom settles in all Countries, a Neglect of which will always shew a Want of Sense or Modesty. It matters not in this Case, what Men are: Treat them as if they were what they should be. This is taking the good-natured Side; which is always most becoming to us, always most safe. You hurt not yourself when you render to another the Honours proper to his Station: But if you take upon yourself to judge of his Pretensions, and proportion your Respect to the Opinion

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you have of him, you may very easily wrong him; and Wrongs of this Sort are not often those which are borne with the greatest Patience. A Man of Spirit will rate his Honour, higher than he rates his Money; and as in all Disputes about Property, it is true that no Man ought to take upon himself to be his own Judge, the Consequence is that where Right cannot be tried, as in this Case, by a proper Umpire, we have nothing to do but to submit to the Man in Possession. If a Man demands Money of me I may dispute his Title; but we should never dispute any Man's Right to the Honours customarily paid to his Rank and Quality. There are no Courts to decide Differences of this kind; nor is it worth while perhaps that there should be any. A Man's Money is his Maintenance; but good Manners cost us nothing.

Trivial as Offences of this kind may seem, they are not without their bad Consequences in respect of the Peace and Order of human Society. Men are jealous of their Honour, because upon common Presumption, Honour is founded upon some real Merit; and the Denial of it carries a

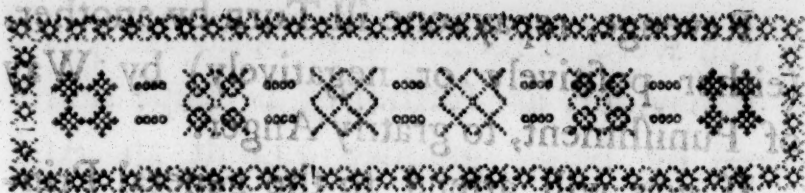
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tacit Imputation upon a Man's Character, which is the most valuable Part of his Property. What Heart-burnings, what Feuds, what Outrages, are often occasioned by an unbecoming Word, or disrespectful Behaviour? When Honour hangs upon Authority, as it very frequently does, it is its natural Defence; as it is a Hedge against those Freedoms and Familiarities that would bring Authority into Contempt. If you would hold a Man in Subjection, you must not treat him as your Equal; and he who affects to be so treated shews a Disposition not to bear your control.

The Experience of this hath given rise to all those outward Distinctions which, by the Custom of all Nations, separate Men of high Rank from the common Croud. A Man of Sense will very easily see that a Robe or a Diadem make no real Difference in Men. Neither Mind nor Body receive any additional Worth from the outward Case or Furniture. But Authority makes a Difference; and when you see the Ensigns of Power, you are sensibly admonished before whom you stand, and in what Sort to demean yourself; and a much better Way of Instruction it is than
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if you were to receive a Rebuke for your ill Behaviour, as Authority is kept more sacred by being guarded against an Attempt, than by being rescued from one. It is the same Thing in common Life. Every Man's Title to respect is best secured, by being placed above the Reach of Affronts, which is the Case when Inferiors treat their Superiors with due Deference, and what the one reasonably expect, the other cheerfully pay.





S E R M O N I V.



ROMANS xii. 19, 20.

Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place to Wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.

Therefore if thine Enemy hunger feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap Coals of Fire on his Head.

S Self-Defence is permitted by the
A Law of God, Revenge not; it
 will be above all Things necessary towards the right handling of this Point to distinguish clearly between these two Things.

Self-Defence then, either repels an Injury offered in order to prevent it; or, in Case an Injury is done, seeks Reparation, or future Security, or both.

Revenge,

Revenge, repays one ill Turn by another, (either positively or negatively) by Way of Punishment, to gratify Anger.

If you will attend to the general Principle upon which Revenge is here forbidden; it will open the Distinction more fully.

Vengeance is mine; I will repay saith the Lord. God hath claimed it as his own peculiar Right, to be the Judge and Punisher of evil Doers: And therefore to take Vengeance into our own Hands is to usurp the Prerogative of God. Therefore the Apostle bids us to *give place to Wrath*; meaning by Wrath, the Wrath of God to be manifested upon evil Doers; to which we are properly said to *give place*, when we give it the Preference to Methods of our own chusing; that is, when we forbear to take Vengeance ourselves, and leave our Cause wholly to the Judgment of God. By which you perceive that Wrath is due to all the *Workers of Iniquity*; but that God is the only Person in whom the Execution rests.

But how so? You will ask. God will punish bad Men in another World, we know: But are we to sit down quiet under
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all Kinds of bad Treatment, and refer our Cause to the last Day? This is not the Thing. The Judgment of the last Day, is the great and most remarkable Act of God's Authority as the God of Vengeance. In the mean while, for the Preservation of the Publick Peace and Order, he sits as Judge in this World by the Magistrate, who is his Vicegerent, and to whom all Appeals for present Redress will lie; as the Apostle tells us in the beginning of the next Chapter. *Rulers are not a Terror to good Works, but to the Evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the Power? Do that which is Good and thou shall have Praise of the same. For he is the Minister of God to thee for Good. But if thou do that which is Evil be afraid, for he beareth not the Sword in vain; for he is the Minister of God; a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doeth Evil.* This Account of the Magistrate's Office, setting him forth as the Minister of God; the Revenger to execute Wrath upon evil Doers; being so closely connected with the Precept in the Text to *give place to Wrath*; plainly intimates, that the one hath an Aspect to the other; and that the Magistrate is pointed out, as the proper Person

Person to whom we are to have recourse for Redress in Matters of wrong: And from hence these following Conclusions will arise. viz.

I. That all private Methods by which Evil is inflicted on others by Way of Punishment, or Retaliation for Wrongs done and compleated, are Acts of Revenge. For the Appeal is not made to God, not being made to the Magistrate who is the Minister of God. And this is the Law of Nature as well as the Law of the Gospel. For every Member of Society as such, having, (as I have before observed) by Compact, vested his natural Right of Self-Defence, in the Magistrate as the common Arbitrator; it must stand as a Bar against all private Methods of Redress. For where would be the Sense of making Compacts, if it were to be submitted to every Man's private Discretion whether he shall abide by them or not? The referring Differences between Man and Man, to the Magistrate, is a Practice founded upon the most weighty Reason; for who is qualified to be his own Judge? If Injuries receive deserved Punishment, the Punishment should bear a due Proportion to the Offence; for so far

far as a Man exceeds the Bounds of Equity, he himself becomes the Aggressor. Now this is a Point concerning which very few are fit to judge for themselves. For there is that in Self-love, which always inclines us to be partial to our own Interests; and if to this natural Sway we add the Weight of Anger and Resentment; it will be next to an Impossibility to keep the Ballance even. Judgement will be as surely wrong as Passion is blind, and never satisfied till the Odds are greatly on its own Side. This Reasoning is equally applicable to either Party; and therefore suppose Law and Government out of the Question, the World would soon be filled with Violence and Blood-shed; whilst each Man thinking himself aggrieved, each in his Turn would think he had a Right to make Reprisals.

To avoid this Mischief is the principal End of Man's entering into Society; which being done by the Influence and Direction of that Reason which God hath given us for our mutual Preservation; every Magistrate lawfully constituted, is as much the Minister of God, as if he had been so proclaimed by a Voice from Heaven. But do you not see that whilst by referring your-
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self to the Magistrate, you acknowledge yourself to be an unfit Judge; in resuming your Cause again to yourself you deny it? These Things are a Contradiction. But plain as this is to common Sense, there is nothing that, in Practice, we are more apt to forget. Many appeal to the Law for Justice; few acquiesce in its Determinations: Publick Appeals are commonly attended with private Grudges, which put the contending Parties upon doing ill Offices to each other; which is (so far as in us lies) to contradict the Sentence of the Law, and a taking the Matter into our own Hands. Legal Decisions are not always right; nor can Human Laws (ever liable to some Tincture from Human Imperfection) provide in all Cases for a strict and full Administration of Justice. Be these Defects greater or less, they must be borne with. If the Law gives Remedy, we must accept it as the Law gives it: If it gives none, we must sit down contented.

II. My next Observation is, that Appeals to the Magistrate for redress in Cases of wrong, are not in themselves Revenge, but Acts of Self-Defence. For the Appeal is made to God through the Law.

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The Law is every Man's Protection ; and every Man defends himself, who appeals to and is protected by the Magistrate, in whom the whole Right of Self-Defence, which lies dispersed among the several Individuals, centers as in one. And this is to be understood not only when Reparation is sought ; but also when future Security is intended. For one End of the Magistrate's Office is to punish evil Doers, in order to prevent such like Offences for the future, as St. Paul teaches in the Passage just now laid down. There would be no Difficulty in this, if our Saviour had not said (Matt. v. 38.) *Resist not Evil, &c.* and if St. Paul himself (1 Cor. vi. 1.) had not rebuked the Corinthians for going to Law before the Magistrates. *Dare any of you having a Matter against another go to Law before the Unjust, and not before the Saints ? --- Is it so that there is not a wise Man among you ; no not one, that shall be able to judge between his Brethren ? But Brother goeth to Law with Brother, and that before the Unbelievers. --- Why do ye not rather take Wrong ? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded.*

Now

Now as to the Passage in St. Matthew, it seems indeed to be an absolute Prohibition of all Appeals to the Magistrate for Justice. But whom does it concern? Not Christians universally; but the first Christians and Preachers of the Gospel only, who, in other Cases as well as in this, were to renounce the ordinary Methods of Defence that the Power of God might be the more visible in their Preservation. * And as to what St. Paul said to his Corinthians, it comes to no more than this, viz. That they did wrong in going to Law about Matters, that might as well or better have been ended by amicable References among themselves. And you or I may say *now* (with great Truth and Reason) that it is better to make up Differences in an amicable Way, when it may be done, than to go to Law; and honest and peaceable Men will, generally, chuse it. But this does not amount to a Condemnation of all Law-suits in the Gross; which will by no Means consist with the Appointment of the Magistrate's Office; for where is the Sense of setting up the Magistrate as a common

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* See my Boyle's Lecture, p. 171. &c.

Arbitrator if nobody is to appeal to him?
---But it should be observed upon these Cases, that tho' having recourse to the Law for Redress, is not in the Nature of it Revenge; it will become Revenge when it is done, not with a single Eye to the Right of Self-Defence, but, to gratify an angry and malicious Mind. The very best Things will be corrupted and change their Natures, when they are done upon a wrong Principle. If I pay my Debts only to keep out of the Fingers of the Law; I am a Knave. If I do Acts of Beneficence to catch at the Applause of Men; I have not Charity. And so, in the present Case; If I prosecute my Neighbour merely to distress him, not to preserve or recover my own Right (which I either do not value, or of which I may think myself otherwise sufficiently secure) nor with any regard to Publick Utility; I am a Transgressor; I take Vengeance into my own Hands. For the Magistrate is God's Minister for the Purposes of common Defence, and no further; and though He cannot distinguish these Cases, God (the Searcher of Hearts) both can and will distinguished them at the last Day. So says Holy Job, Chap. xxxi.
where

where giving a Catalogue of Sins for which God will punish; he (at Verses 29, 30.) mentions this --- *If I rejoiced at the Destruction of him that hateth me; or lift up myself (or was glad) when Evil found him; or suffered my Mouth to sin by wishing a Curse to his Soul.*

III. My next and last Observation is, that to withhold necessary Help or Assistance to a Man in extremity, when it is in our Power to give it, only because he has offended us, is an Act of Revenge: For so the Text places it. *Avenge not yourselves---for Vengeance is mine-----Therefore if thine Enemy hunger feed him; if he thirst give him Drink. Why therefore? Where is the Inference; unless to refuse Help in such Cases be an Act of Revenge? Nor are we to stop here: The Obligation reaches to all Acts of common Charity, where nothing but the Offence intervenes to hinder its Operations. So says our Saviour. Love your Enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you. Matt. v. 43, 44. But you should take this along with you, that as the Offices of Charity, before an Offence is com-*

mitted are, in the Nature of them, free; so they will remain afterwards: For if an Offence committed should not put the Offender in a worse Condition; there is no Sense in supposing that it will place him in a better. And therefore if you have Reasons to refuse a Man your Charity who has not offended you (which it is easy to conceive you may) for the same or for like Reasons, you may refuse him after he has offended you. But deny no Man your Charity merely out of Anger and Resentment. This is Revenge. This is judging the Offence; which belongs not to you, but to God.

To set this Point in a clear Light it should be observed that there is a great Difference, between Debts of Justice and the Obligations of Charity. They are both Debts; but they are Debts of a different kind, and draw after them different Effects. A Debt of Justice is a Debt to the Man; who may impeach me if I pay it not. A Debt of Charity is a Debt, not to the Man, but to the common Human Nature, or, (to speak with Propriety) to God the Author of Nature; who by the very Law of our Beings, hath bound it upon

upon us to be mutually helpful to each other; without which the Ends of his Providence could not be carried on. If I borrow a Sum of Money of my Neighbour and refuse to pay it; he has his Remedy at Law. If he asks my Charity and I refuse to give it him; he has no Demand upon me. The Magistrate cannot punish me, but God will judge me.

Again, Debts of Justice strictly bind; Debts of Charity are liable to a Variety of Limitations incident to both Parties. If I owe a Man a Sum of Money; I have no Right to call the Creditor to Terms: If I ask a Man's Charity he may lay Terms upon me; and in many Cases it may be fit he should. The Reason of this Difference is, that Justice is a precise Thing; Charity admits of Latitude. The very Act of borrowing infers the Obligation to pay: But the Obligation to Charity, depends both upon the Abilities of the one to give, and the Qualifications of the other to ask Relief; which the Law hath no where settled (as, indeed, it could not settle it) but left it to private Discretion.

These Things considered, you will see a very plain Reason why (Cases of Self-Defence excepted) a Man cannot beat, or wound, or kill, or inflict any positive

Evil upon another because he has injured him. The Injury makes him accountable to God; but it does not destroy the Obligations of Natural Justice. But in Cases of Charity where the Obligation is conditional, I may refuse to give Aid if those Conditions are wanting. This is not Revenge; because I am not supposed to refuse a Man Assistance because he has injured me, or because I am angry with him; but because he is unqualified to receive it. In such Points as these therefore it is above all Things necessary that Circumstances be duly attended to; for your Direction in which, Examples will serve better than abstracted Rules. Take then, if you please, these few that follow.

When a Person has injured us and afterwards asks our Assistance; it will be natural for him to make Professions of his Sorrow for having offended us: In which Case our Saviour enjoins Forgiveness. *If he repent, forgive him. Luke xvii. 3.* Two Questions may be asked upon this Case. As,

1. Does the want of Repentance discharge the Obligation to Charity? The Words alone will not so carry it. For
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though it is said *if he repent forgive him*; it is not said *if he does not repent thou shalt not forgive him*. Repentance will always be a great Inducement to Forgiveness where it is; but it will not follow that it should stand as a Bar where it is not. For hear what our Saviour says in another Place, Luke vi. 35. --- *Love your Enemies --- and ye shall be the Children of the highest; for he is kind to the Unthankful and to the Evil, or, (as it is in St. Matt. v. 45.) he maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good; and sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust. Be ye therefore merciful as your Father also is merciful.* If a Man offends and repents not, the Evil sticks to him; and an obstinate Spirit, that persists in Mischief will not consist with Gratitude. This notwithstanding, our Lord directs us to shew Mercy; and this, after the Example of our Heavenly Father, who is kind to the Unthankful and to the Evil, as well as to the Thankful, Repentant, and Good. Can there be a plainer Lesson? The Reason is as plain. For what have I to do with a Man's Repentance? Be that to God and to himself. I am not to judge him for that; which

which yet if I take upon me to do, if I deny Relief where nothing else intervenes to hinder. So it was ordered even under the Old Law, Exod. xxiii. 4, 5. *If thou meet thine Enemy's Ox or his Ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the Ass of him that hateth thee lying under his Burden--- thou shalt surely help him.* What can the Man be supposed to know, of his Enemy's Repentance in such Cases? Or what Direction is there to enquire after it?---But these are small Matters. Suppose the Enemy himself to have been in Distress; cast into a Pit and unable to help himself; would not he that found him (by the Sense and Spirit of the Law) have been bound to assist him? Much more no doubt, supposing the Right of Self-Defence out of the Question. These, and all such Cases, stand upon that general Principle of the Natural Law, viz. That in Cases of Necessity, the Necessity itself is a sufficient Plea for Mercy, however the Reckoning may stand as to the Man's moral Qualifications, of which we have nothing to do to take Cognisance. And thus our Saviour represents it in the Story of the
good

good Samaritan, as will be shewn hereafter. *

2. Now on the other Hand let us suppose that the Offender does repent; am I therefore absolutely bound to remit what otherwise might justly be demanded? I think not: Because Reasons may intervene to disqualify him. If a Man robs me upon the High Way and repents; am I therefore bound not to prosecute him? No; in this Case the Law itself disqualifies him. It is an Offence against the Publick, for which Publick Justice may be demanded. So if a Man cheats me, and becomes insolvent; I may send him to Gaol. It is an Act of Self-Defence; the proper Punishment of an Evil Doer. I should judge otherwise, when honest and industrious Men are reduced by Misfortunes--- But this exceeds the Bounds of my Subject, and has been spoken to in a former Discourse. †

* See Sermon 5. † See Vol. I. Sermon 10.



S E R M O N V.



LUKE X. 37.

Then said Jesus unto him, go and do thou likewise.

E read at the 25th Verse of this
W Chapter, that a certain Lawyer
stood up and tempted Jesus, saying,
Master what shall I do to inherit eternal
Life? In answer to this Question our Sa-
viour refers him to the Law, and asks him
what he reads there? Of which the Law-
yer gives him the Sum and Substance in
these Words, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy
God, with all thy Heart, and with all thy
Soul, and with all thy Strength, and with all
thy Mind, and thy Neighbour as thyself.*
Verse 27. Our Saviour bids him observe
this

this Commandment, and he should find what he sought for. *This do and thou shalt live.* Verse 28. The Lawyer not satisfied with this Answer, further asks. *And who is my Neighbour?* Verse 29. The Text says that in asking this Question *he* was *willing to justify himself*, that is to shew himself to be that righteous Man which the Law described, which if he could have done, he would perhaps have told our Saviour, that there was little Need to come to him for Justification. For the History says that he came to Christ *tempting* him, that is in a captious Way, not moved by a Sense of his own unworthiness, and an honest Desire of being better instructed. Concerning the Love of God, what it was, he says nothing, supposing probably that that there could be no Mistake about this, and that he stood clear in this Point, by a nice and punctual Observance of the Ceremonies of the Law: And if he could have drawn from our Saviour such an Account of the other Precept, that of loving our Neighbour as ones self, as would have agreed with his own Practice, and the general Sense of the Jewish Doctors at that Time, all would have been to his With.

But

But instead of giving a direct Answer to his Question, our Saviour tells him the following Story.

A certain Man went down from Jerusalem to Jerico and fell among Thieves, which stripped him of his Raiment, and wounded him, and departed leaving him half dead. And by Chance there came down a certain Priest that Way, and when he saw him he passed by on the other Side. And likewise a Levite when he was at the Place came and looked on him, and passed by on the other Side. But a certain Samaritan as he journied came where he was; and when he saw him he had Compassion on him; and went to him, and bound up his Wounds, pouring in Oyl and Wine, and set him on his own Beast, and brought him to an Inn and took care of him. And on the Morrow when he departed, he took out Two-pence and gave them to the Host, and said unto him, take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more when I come again I will repay thee. Which now of these three thinkest thou was Neighbour unto him that fell among the Thieves? And he said, he that shewed Mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, go and do thou likewise.

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It is not said who this unfortunate Traveller was, whether a Jew or a Stranger. If you suppose him to have been a Stranger it will best account for the Conduct of the Priest and Levite, who both passed by and left him in the same helpless Condition in which they found him. The Jews (who are here represented by these two Characters) considered none as their Neighbours but those of their own Nation; and in consequence of this Notion, looked upon themselves as discharged from the most common Offices of Humanity in respect to Strangers. This Notion it was our Saviour's Intention to correct, and to shew this Teacher of the Law, that they *greatly erred not knowing the Scriptures*; and that no Distinction of Religion or Country ought to be attended to in such Cases as these. It is expressly mentioned that the merciful Man was a Samaritan; and it is a Circumstance material to lead us to the true Drift of our Saviour's Argument.

The Question put by the Lawyer was, *Who is my Neighbour?* Our Saviour having told the Story, asks, in his turn, *which of the three, (the Priest, the Levite, or the*
Sama-

Samaritan) he thought *was Neighbour to him that fell among the Thieves*; that is, which of the three treated him as his Neighbour? The Lawyer gave Sentence (as every Man of common Sense must) in favour of the Samaritan, *he that shewed Mercy on him*. When therefore our Saviour says, *go thou and do likewise*; meaning that he should follow the Example (not of the Priest and Levite, but) of the Samaritan; he plainly sets forth, that, according to the true Sense and Meaning of the Law, every Man is our Neighbour, and that the Obligation to shew Mercy to those in Distress, is not founded upon any Relation of Religion or Country, but upon the common Relation of Humanity. For such, and such only (as the Story supposes) was the Relation between the Samaritan, and the Man that fell among Thieves. If the Case had been put between two Persons of any other different Nation or Religion, the Conclusion would have been the same. But by mentioning a Samaritan, our Saviour, no Doubt, intended to mortify the Jewish Pride. For the Samaritans were a People whom the Jews had in the greatest Abhorrence on a religious Account; and
it

it was a very severe Rebuke to single out an Example even among those whom they held as accursed of God, who understood the Rules of common Charity, better than themselves. In commending the Behaviour of the Samaritan, he tacitly condemns the Behaviour of the Priest and Levite, that is of the Jews: And it was also a Condemnation of the main Body of the Samaritans themselves, between whom and the Jews there was a mutual Hatred. We find from John iv. 9. that *the Jews had no Dealings with the Samaritans*; no not so much as to give or receive a *Cup of cold Water*; and it appears from Luke ix. 53. that the Samaritans would not receive our Saviour and his Company, because they found them to be Jews. Now, as our Saviour's Resolution upon this one Case, shews what it would become the Samaritans to do towards the Jews; it also shews what would be proper Behaviour from the Jews towards the Samaritans; and that both were greatly in the Wrong in carrying their religious Differences into a Breach of common Charity. If a Samaritan ought to look upon a Jew as his Neighbour, and treat him accordingly; by parity of Reason a Jew ought

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ought to place a Samaritan in the same Light; for this Relation is always reciprocal.

There can be no Doubt of the Truth of the general Principle upon which our Saviour builds, viz. That the Obligation to humane, benevolent Actions, is not founded upon personal Merit, but upon that general Relation in which we stand to each other as Men; to which we are plainly directed by that Sympathy and Fellow-feeling, of each others Miseries and Misfortunes which run through the whole Human Species, and which God hath implanted in us, for very wise Purposes. The Samaritan (as the Story leads us to suppose) knew not who or what the Man was that had fallen among the Theives. But he saw him to be a Man, and in a miserable Condition, and upon this he shewed Mercy to him. Every Man has his own Experience to help him to judge in this Case. You cannot see a Man in Distress but you must pity him; which is a natural Direction to you to help and assist him; for God has given us no Passion in vain. It is neither safe nor right to follow the Passions in all their Motions; for they may move to

exceeds;

excess; but there is nothing that a Man naturally covets, which, under proper Circumstances, is not naturally fit for him. A Man may eat too much, or he may drink too much; and if he does, it will be no excuse to say he was prompted to it by his natural Appetites. But the Sense of Hunger, and the Sense of Thirst, are certainly a Proof that eating and drinking are fit for him. In like Manner, the Sense of Compassion, which we all of us feel when Objects of Compassion offer themselves, as naturally as we feel Hunger and Thirst when the Body wants Refreshment, shews that Acts of Mercy are fit for us; and as this Sense is not limited to this or that particular Man, but extends to the whole Species; its proper Acts and Operations ought to be of equal Extent, where there are not Reasons to infer a Limitation. For where there are such Reasons, and the Appetite urges beyond, it moves to excess and is to be restrained, as in all other Cases where Appetite is concerned. It will be necessary therefore to shew, to what Limitations, the Exercise of Compassion is naturally subject; or whether Religion or Country hath any thing to do with them. For when this is

once understood, the right Behaviour in such Cases will easily appear.

It is to be observed then, that the Sense of Compassion, which we perceive upon the Sight of the Misery of others, and which gives us a Fellow-feeling, arises from the real Feelings we have of our own Wants. If I did not know what it was to hunger or thirst; I should not have the least Notion, what an other Man feels when he wants Food, and therefore could have no Compassion for him. It is also certain that the feeling of our own Wants, hath a much stronger Effect and more powerfully moves us, than the Sense of the Wants of others, which we gather by comparison only with our own Wants; which we know not by Sense, but understand or apprehend by the Act or Operation of the Mind, transferring, as it were, our own Wants to them. If a Man is actually in Pain, by a Fit of the Stone or Gout, it will much more strongly affect him, than the Idea or Remembrance of that Pain can, when the Fit is over: And we can never have a stronger Sense of the Miseries of others to excite our Compassion, than what the Idea or Remembrance of the same Miseries

Miseries, or something like them, which we have felt ourselves, can create. Now, since the Sense of our own Wants, is both prior in Nature, and more powerful in its Operations, than any Sense we can have of the Wants of others; the Consequence will be, that our own Wants are first to be attended to, and that we can never be obliged to give Aid to others, which in the same Degree and Measure, we want for ourselves.

Next to ourselves, are those who stand allied to us by Proximity of Blood; as our Parents, or our Children and near Relations, towards whom Nature has implanted a stronger Propensity than towards the Bulk of Mankind. These therefore, in Cases of Competition, are to have the Preference; and so are our Friends and Benefactors; all from whom we have received good Offices; to whom we stand engaged by the Ties of Gratitude, as well as of Humanity.

From these Principles we may lay down this general Rule. That it is a weak kind of Compassion, which leads us to be helpful to others in our own Wrong; or to the neglect of higher Obligations. But this Rule hath nothing to do here; for what

was the Case? A Man was found upon the Road, stripped and wounded by Theives, and ready to perish. The Theives were gone, and there was no Hazard of Life or Limbs in coming in to his Relief. All that it cost the Samaritan was, the Trouble of taking him up and carrying him to an Inn, and paying the Expence of his Entertainment; which we are not to suppose exceeded the Measure of his Abilities. This Action our Saviour commends; and therefore all Acts of Charity under the like Circumstances; that is when real Objects of Compassion present themselves, and we have the Opportunity and Abilities to relieve them. The Lawyer perhaps would have thought himself dispensed with in this Case, as the Priest and the Levite did, who passed by and gave no Assistance, to the miserable Object that lay before them. Upon what Principle could these Men act? It could not be pretended that the Man wanted no Help; and for ought that appears they had the same Abilities to have helped him that the Samaritan had. There remains nothing therefore to found an Exception upon, but the personal Qualifications of the Man. They knew not who or

what

what he was. No more (as I observed just now) did the Samaritan. He made no Enquiries of this Sort; and it must be supposed to have been our Saviour's Instruction, that he had nothing to do, to make any such Enquiries. It was enough that he saw him in Distress, and that he had the Opportunity to give him Assistance.

To put the Objection as strong as possible, we will suppose him to have been a very bad Man; a Sinner against God, and an *Alien to the Commonwealth of Israel*. The Question is whether Circumstances of this Sort ought to stand as a Bar against common Charity? And the Answer is plainly, No. If a Man is a Knave or a dangerous Man, you have a right to keep him from hurting you; but to be wanting to him in any common Duty, (to which you must otherwise confess yourself obliged) merely on the Account of his Sins, is, in Effect, to punish him for his Sins; which is an Usurpation upop the Authority and Prerogative of God, who hath declared *Vengeance is mine, I will repay*. Rom. xii. 19. If instead of supposing the Man simply a Sinner against God, you should suppose some Wrong done by him to yourself, you would, at

least, have as good a Plea; and yet it is certain (and it has been * already proved) that all Methods of causing Men to suffer for Wrongs, where Self-Preservation does not make them necessary, are by this Rule to be condemned: And therefore the Apostle expressly adds Verse 20. *Therefore if thine Enemy hunger feed him; if he thirst give him drink.* Your Enemy may be a bad Man, and the Apostle supposes him such. But you must discharge the Duty which the † present Exigency requires of you as a Man, and leave the Offence to God who is the proper Judge.

It is no hard Matter to account how Differences in Religion come to operate (as they very frequently do) to the Breach of

* See the forgoing Sermon. † It is this Consideration that commends Hospitals maintained by Publick or Private Charity, for Persons sick or lame or otherwise distressed; the Objects of which, no Doubt, are many of them very bad People, and perhaps there may be great Numbers of them, whose Distresses have been owing to their Vices. But this notwithstanding, such Provisions (prudently directed) are undoubtedly right. The present Exigency is a Bar against all Exceptions of this Kind. But it may be fit for me just to hint, that whilst Charities of this Sort abound, great Care should be taken that the Publick Discipline goes Hand in Hand with them, to keep the Poor from Idleness and Debauchery; otherwise they may introduce the worst of Mischiefs into Society. I am afraid that this is not sufficiently attended to in these Times.

of Charity, though it is impossible in any Case to justify it. So far as Anger and Resentment prevail, so far they drive out natural Compassion and make Men cruel and hard-hearted; and their is nothing so apt to raise a Man's Indignation as the Impeachment of his Judgment. For as Understanding is the Distinction of a Man from a Brute, so it is the Ornament he is most proud of. Every Man is supposed to believe his own Religion to be the true; and, of Consequence, the Religion of another who differs from him to be false, so far as the Difference goes. To differ therefore from another Man in Religion is a tacit charge of Ignorance, and Mistake in a Point in which it most of all concerns every Man to be rightly informed; and this Charge being always mutual, the Resentment will be so too. This, together with some Worldly Interest or other which happens to stand connected with the Profession of Religion, I take to be the general Cause of religious Animosities; which, however, Men never care to own, but always pretend Zeal for the Honour and Glory of God. Where their is a real Concern for God's Honour religious Differences, can never
destroy

destroy Charity, unless Men be exceeding weak or superstitious. For it is not for the Honour and Glory of God, that Men should turn themselves into Wolves, and Tygers. He that considers Religion as an Instrument to improve Human Nature, does honour to Religion and the Author of it. But it is a very gross Absurdity to think that Religion should ever be intended to make us worse; which is to make God contradict himself, and destroy the Workmanship of his own Hands.

If Differences in Religion ought not to operate to the Breach of Charity, neither ought Differences of Country or Climate. For why am I to deny another Man a good Office, because when he was first born he did not draw the same Air that I did? You may as well say that I may refuse a Man a good Turn, because he is not exactly of my Size, and Complexion; or because his Cloaths are cut in a different Fashion from mine. Every Country, it is true, is a distinct Society of Men, tied together by an Intercommunity of Help and Assistance, which they do not hold alike with the rest of the World. This is a Reason why we should be more kind to

our Countrymen, and our near Neighbours; but it is not a Reason why we should be kind to them only, or why we should refuse help to Strangers, when without Prejudice to our Country, we can do them good. Upon some Accounts perhaps Strangers may deserve the Preference; as by their Situation as Strangers, they may be cut off from the common Means of helping themselves, and are farther removed from the Reach of Friends. And therefore Courtesie to Strangers, has amongst all civilized Nations been looked upon as a prime Instance of Humanity, which should always exert itself most in Proportion as its Aids are most wanted. St. Paul mentioning the Qualifications of Widows that were to be maintained by the common Charity of the Church, makes this to be one *if she have lodged Strangers*. 1 Tim. v. 10. And at Heb. xiii. 2. he gives this general Rule to all Christians, *be not forgetful to entertain Strangers*. In which we perceive the great Difference between the Spirit of the Law and the Spirit of the Gospel: The one narrow and selfish; the other universally benevolent and humane. Not that the Jews had Encouragement from their
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Lawgiver Moses thus to confine their Benevolence to their own Countrymen; but they took up this Practice of themselves, as they grew to be corrupted in their Principles; and it is not the only Instance in which they had *made void the Law of God by their Traditions*. But tho' upon some Accounts, and under certain Circumstances, Strangers may deserve the Preference, yet in a general Way of Reckoning it is due to our Countrymen because we owe them more; because we are more nearly allied to them by mutual good Offices; and every new, beneficial Relation both strengthens and enlarges the Obligation to Charity. It is the same Thing as to those of the same Religion; for Agreement in Opinion and Judgment in these important Concerns, naturally works Kindness, for a like Reason that Difference in Opinion causes Resentment; and (barring particular Exceptions) where Nature herself excites to more Good, it is always right to shew more. And therefore St. Paul whilst he is exhorting us to universal Charity, directs us to treat our Christian Brethren with particular Distinction. *As we have Opportunity let us do good unto all Men, especially unto them who*
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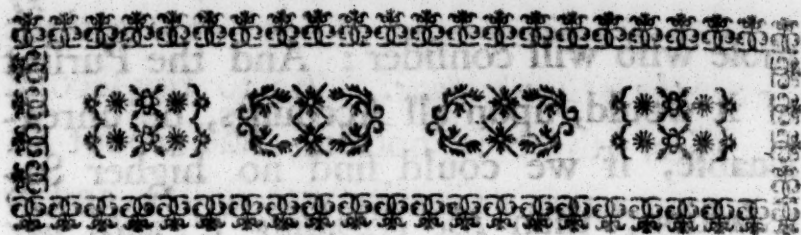
are of the Household of Faith. Gal. vi. 10. Every good Christian is indeed a Benefactor to another by his Example, which will turn to a much better Account, than Benefits of another kind of which we usually make more Reckoning.

I have said thus much in Support of our Saviour's Determination upon this Story. And now, at the Close let me add one Thing more, which, no Doubt, it was his Intention we should learn by it, viz. That true Charity will always be accepted of God, how much soever Men may be mistaken as to their religious Principles; and that without it a right Belief joined with the most punctual Observance of the Externals of Religion will avail us nothing: The Jews differed (as I said before) with the Samaritans on a religious Account; and with respect to this Difference our Saviour himself has decided, that *Salvation was of the Jews.* But this notwithstanding, the Samaritan's Charity to the poor Traveller in Distress, is accepted and recommended as an Example to those who in other respects were much better instructed; whilst the Priest and the Levite, notwithstanding the Purity of their Faith and
their

their Strictness and punctuality in observing the Rituals of the Law (which was the common Fashion of those Times, as if all depended upon it) are yet declared unfit for the Kingdom of Heaven. For they could not *inherit eternal Life*, unless they *loved their Neighbour as themselves*; which this Case, as determined by our Saviour, shews they did not, in the Sense in which their Law had commanded it. But I think we have no Warrant from hence to say, that the Observance of the Law was so indifferent a Thing, as that if these Jews had had that Charity which the Samaritan shewed, they might have excused themselves as to all the rest; or that the Samaritan's Charity, was of so great value that he thereby stood justified before God, notwithstanding the Errors of his Religion. For as to the former Question, our Saviour has otherwise determined it himself, Matt. xxiii. 23. where, though he places *Mercy* among the *weightier Matters* of the Law; yet he declares that the ritual Service had also its Weight, and ought to be attended to. *Ye pay Tythe of Mint, and Anise and Cummin, and have omitted the weightier Matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy, and Faith,*

Faith. These ought ye to have done and not leave the other undone. As to the second Question there is nothing said about it. The Samaritan's Charity was right; and so far as this went he had done his Duty. But as to his wrong Religion how far it did or did not affect his Condition before God in respect to a future State, this is a Point which our Saviour has left where he found it; and there it will best become us to leave it too.





S E R M O N VI.



PROVERBS xxx. 8, 9.

*Give me neither Poverty nor Riches ; feed
me with Food convenient for me.*

*Lest I be full and deny thee, and say who is
the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal,
and take the Name of my God in vain.*

 **A**ll Men are naturally desirous of
Happiness ; it must be as natural
for them to be desirous of every
Thing that may serve as an Instrument to
make them happy. It is for this Reason,
that Riches are generally coveted ; which
command all those outward Helps, which
are necessary either to the Support, or the
Comforts of Life. Barely to be master
of so much Wealth, has little in it to
those

those who will consider : And the Pursuit of it would, upon all Accounts, be unreasonable, if we could find no higher Satisfaction, than *the beholding it with our Eyes*. But when we see this sovereign Mistress of the World, not shut up to rust in Coffers, but, shining in her Glory, with Honour, Power, and Pleasure, attending on her Train ; this gives so bewitching an Appearance, that few Minds have Strength enough to resist her Temptations.

It is very certain, that if Man was made only for sensual Pleasure, he would have nothing but sensual Things to be solicitous after : And upon this Foot, the greater the Abundance in outward Comforts, the more perfect would our Condition be. But if we consider ourselves, as Creatures accountable to God in the Use of his Gifts, and placed under the Restraints of Religion and Virtue ; the Case will greatly alter ; and it must be as easy to apprehend how some may have too much, as it is to understand how others may have too little. For in this View of Things, the Happiness of Man will be something superior to the Happiness of this present

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Life; and the Fitness of the Means towards it, must be estimated according to the Connection they have with Religion and Virtue.

This Observation will open the Way to us, to see the Reasonableness of the wise Man's Wish which I have now read to you. He considers Riches and Poverty, each as a dangerous Extream; the one tending to make us forgetful of God; and the other as being too strong a Temptation to Violence, Fraud, and Murmurings against Providence. Therefore he prays to be delivered from both, and desires only *Food convenient*, i. e. a moderate Competency. Should I go about to determine to every body's Satisfaction, what a moderate Competency is; I am sensible I should engage in a very fruitless Undertaking. In this Point, we are very apt to differ in our Judgments, one considering that as a mere Sufficiency, which another looks upon as a very plentiful Provision. But whatever Room there may be for Mistake in applying this Rule, the Rule itself is easy to be understood, viz. That a middle State, somewhere between the Extreams of overflowing Wealth and pinching Necessity,

cessity, is the most safe, and therefore the most desirable. This, I conceive, comprehends the general Meaning of the Text; and this is the Point I intend to speak to.

To begin with *Riches*: It is very obvious to remark in general, that they put almost every Thing into our Power, which has a Disposition to gratify the corrupt Inclinations of Men. Whence the Apostle has observed, that *they that will be rich fall into Temptation and a Snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition*, 1 Tim. vi. 9. It must be confessed withal, that rich Men have many Opportunities of doing Good which poor Men want. But it is not so easy and so ready a Thing to please God, as it is to please ourselves. To make a proper Use of the Blessings of Providence requires much Wisdom and Resolution. To pervert them to a wrong End, lies within the Reach of every one, who has the Appetite to do a bad Thing. Riches are then applied to their proper Use, when every Man honestly discharges those several Duties which the Degree of Wealth which he enjoys, qualifies him for, and which are proper to the Station and

Character he bears. And these Duties will always increase in Proportion as Wealth more abounds. But as the Duties increase, the Temptations to offend will increase with them, and which of them shall prevail, will depend upon our Wisdom and Virtue; and great Virtue it must be, in many Cases, that will keep us from swerving. Suppose a Man placed in a publick Station; it will be the hardest Thing in the World to behave properly, if he be too much addicted to himself. His Trust gives him a Handle to defraud the Community; his Power to oppress. And these will be the sure Consequences, where Pride and Avarice are the predominant Principles. So it is in private Life. He who hath Wealth, hath the Instrument of being beneficial to others. He may feed the Hungry, he may cloath the Naked; he may protect the Innocent from Oppression and Wrong. It is certainly his Duty so to do; and God will require it at his Hands. But it is as sure he that will fail in these Points, if he is intemperate, if he is covetous, if he gives himself up to Ease and Sloth, and Luxury; and considering the great Sway that Appetite has in most Mens Tempers, it will

will be more than an even Chance against him, that he takes the bad Part.

Now when Men once grow careless of themselves, and regardless of their Fellow-Creatures, they naturally grow forgetful of their Maker too: For where there is not a sober Mind; a just, and honest, and charitable Principle; there can be no Religion. Such as these, may perhaps believe that there is a God; but if they never think of him, or the Duties they owe him, they may as well believe nothing at all concerning him. But sometimes an evil Mind tainted with Vice, and swoln up by those Corruptions which great Abundance naturally breeds, grows up to that Degree of Impiety mentioned in the Text, and says within itself, *who is the Lord*, that I should obey him. It is a hard Matter to stifle those Notices of himself which God hath given in the Works of the Creation; that is, so long as a Man preserves his Dignity, and there is Reason and Reflection enough left to direct him to right Conclusions. But when from Men we become Brutes, we see and know no more of Things beyond Sense than Brutes do. But it is all one, as I said

just now, whether we *deny* God, or whether we grow unmindful of him and his Providence over us. And is there a more common Effect of Wealth to be observed, than such Kind of Forgetfulness as this? When this is the Case, that Riches have made us mere Men of this World; wholly addicted to its Lusts and Vanities; and the great Day of Accounts shall come, when God shall say to us, *Remember Son, that thou in thy Life Time hast received thy good Things*; and the dreadful Sentence shall go forth, *Go ye cursed into everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels*; who among us is there, that will not have Reason to curse the Hand that digged out the deceitful Treasure which hath beguiled him of his true Happiness, and left him overwhelmed in Misery from which there can be no Redemption!

As to Poverty (which I am next to speak to) *that* has also its Temptations, but they are of another Kind. The Providence of God could not, consistently with the Liberty of our Natures, have set a stronger Guard about the Virtues of Temperance and Sobriety, than by denying Men the Means of gratifying their Appetites

petites to Excess. Intemperance and Sensuality therefore are not properly the Vices of a poor Condition, though they are oftentimes the Vices of poor Men. We have too many Instances of those, who seem not to care if their Families starve, or their Neighbours are undone, provided they can but pick up Money to spend in Riot and in Drunkenness. Such as these are bad *against* Nature, and their Behaviour justifies the Wisdom of God and Man in keeping them poor. For if under the heavy Load of Poverty they cannot be restrained from Extravagancies of this Sort, what would they not do if they were at Liberty, and had an Affluence of all Things before them. But a great Temptation indeed it is, when a Man knows not where to go for the next Morsel of Bread, to stoop to mean or wicked Arts, to supply his Necessities! The Dispensations of Providence with Respect to Riches and Poverty are very unequal, and not at all proportioned to the Deserts of Men. Here we shall see a worthless Wretch, taking more Pains in contriving Ways to spend an Estate than his Forefathers did to get it; and wasting every

Year in Harlots and in Rioting, what would suffice to maintain the Poor of a whole Parish. *There*, an honest, industrious Man, toiling and sweating every Day, for a poor Subsistence, and scarce able, by all his Pains, to procure Bread and Rags for himself and Family. What a great Temptation now is it to this poor Man, when he could so usefully employ a small Share of that Wealth which is thus lavishly thrown away, to take it from a Fool, who shews by his Conduct that he has more than he knows what to do with? In all Cases, Necessity pinches hard; and we see by Experience, that Men, who in their natural Dispositions abhor the Thought of doing a dishonest Action, may be, as it were, driven to it by extream Want. Or if through the Dread of human Laws, they are restrained from this; still there will be a Handle left to complain of God, and to tax our Maker with Unkindness and Partiality. This seemingly unequitable Dealing with Men, is apt to shock feeble Minds, when it is seen at a Distance; and much more so, when they feel it in their own Persons.

If it should now be asked on which Side the greatest Danger lies; it would be no hard Matter to shew that if Poverty is more afflictive, Riches are less safe. For human Nature is generally observed to be weakest on the Side of Pleasure; and there are Thousands who will not be forced by common Hardships to do a bad Thing, and yet may easily be bribed to it, by offering something to a favourite Passion, which they indulge. The mere Necessities of Life are soon satisfied; and a poor Man who has always fared hardly, may more easily content himself with Bread and Water, than the rich Man, who has been nursed up in Pomp and Delicacies, can be restrained from taking unlawful Liberties. Add to this, that poor Men are subject to more Checks in their Vices, than rich Men are in theirs; who very often find Ways to set themselves as much above Law, as they are beyond the Reach of Advice or Persuasion.

Thus much being said by Way of Explanation of the wise Man's Wish, let us now see what moral Reflections will arise from it.

I. The

I. The Difficulties which attend a rich and a poor Condition, are no Excuse for the Vices either of rich or poor. Each State has its peculiar Temptations; but they are Temptations *only*. Providence forces no Man against his Will; and if he lays Hardships upon us, he does it with those Encouragements, which are proper to support us under them. This World was intended as a State of Trial; and therefore it was fit that every Condition should have its Trials: But if the same State which ministers the Trial, offers to us likewise all reasonable Encouragements to Well-doing, the Blame of our Conduct when it is otherwise than what becomes us, will fall upon ourselves. Riches tempt us to Excesses of all Kinds. How do they tempt us, but by the Affluence of all good Things? Doth not then the Temptation carry with it its proper Antidote? Can there be a more weighty Argument offered to a reasonable Mind, why he should serve God faithfully than this, that he hath so bountifully provided for him? Did God execute exact, distributive Justice in this World, the Wretch that dares to abuse his Gifts to his

his Dishonour, would presently smart for it, and be experimentally convinced of his Folly as well as his Ingratitude. The Folly is not the less, because the Punishment lies at a Distance. God's Hand is slow to punish, but it is sure; and when it comes it will fall upon us with Vengeance so much the greater as it has been the longer delayed. If any could plead an Excuse from Duty, it would be the poor and the miserable, who this World only considered, have little to thank God for in Comparison to those who live at Ease, and bask in the Sunshine of wordly Prosperity. But such as these should consider, that what is wanting to them in this World, will be made good to them in the next, if they do their Duties with an honest and a patient Mind. This Consideration makes all Conditions alike in this Respect; and shews it to be as reasonable for the poor Man to bear his Poverty, as it is for the rich Man not to abuse his Wealth; the one, in Thankfulness for what he already enjoys, the other in Hopes of what is yet to come, which is as sure to him, as if it was now in Possession. The Difficulties of a rich and a poor Condition, are, it is true, a Reason for our Charity in many Cases.

Cases. To the Poor we should minister out of our Abundance, to make their Burden the more light and easy, and that they may not be put upon desperate Attempts to relieve themselves. The Rich we should treat with Respect and Decency, nor be severe in censuring their smaller Failings, considering how hard a Thing it is to stand upon slippery Ground and not tread sometimes awry. But great Vices are alike inexcusable both in rich and in poor; nor will any Pleas of Hardship attending either Condition, destroy God's sovereign Dominion, or make it unfit for him to require Obedience from his Creatures: Since with Respect to both, it is alike true, that *God is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able; but will with the Temptation also make a Way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.* 1 Cor. x. 13.

2. The Difficulties which attend a wealthy Condition, are not a sufficient Reason, why we should embrace a *voluntary Poverty*. If Riches are such dangerous Tools; it may seem perhaps to be a wise Man's Business to have nothing to do with them; but when God sends Abundance,

bundance, to do as Mariners do in a troubled Sea : Cast out the precious Lumber, to keep the Ship from sinking. But we are to observe that the wise Man in the Text, does not say he was *resolved* not to be rich, but only prays that *God would not give him* Riches ; which is leaving the Matter where it ought to be left, to the Wisdom of Providence. It is necessary to God's Government in this State of Things, that some should be rich and others poor ; and it is our Work to serve as Instruments to the carrying on the Ends of his Government. The Consequence of which is, that if God calls us to Poverty, we must bear it ; if he calls us to a high Estate we must bear it likewise. Some Men are born to great Estates. If they had less they would be liable to fewer Temptations. What then ? Are they to disdain the Gifts of Providence, and give away their Money to whoever is ready to accept it ? This would not be acting like Men : This were to *desert* the Station that Providence hath appointed for them. Use your Wealth therefore, but use it well ; and if you feel your Danger, be so much the more upon your Guard, that Avarice

tempts

tempts you not to hoard it up in Coffers, nor the Love of Pleasure to consume it upon your Lusts. It is the same Thing when Wealth is the Fruit of honest Industry. Most Men are born under a Necessity of using Industry; the first End of which is to provide ourselves with the Necessaries of Life. When this is done, we are not to give up ourselves to Sloth. Upon this Foot, there could be neither rich nor poor; for what is being born to an Estate, but being born to enjoy the Fruits of another's Industry. All Wealth originally springs from Industry; and when God puts it into a Man's Power by honest Industry to raise an Estate, he is as much *called* to Riches, as if he was born to them. And certainly better will it become us, because it will best answer the wise Ends of Providence, to follow Industry to the Improvement of our Substance, than to make ourselves useless Members of human Society. We were not born for ourselves only, but also for the Good of our Fellow-Creatures; and every honest industrious Man is a publick Benefactor; especially if he gathers not for himself alone, but to dispense to others, whom
God's

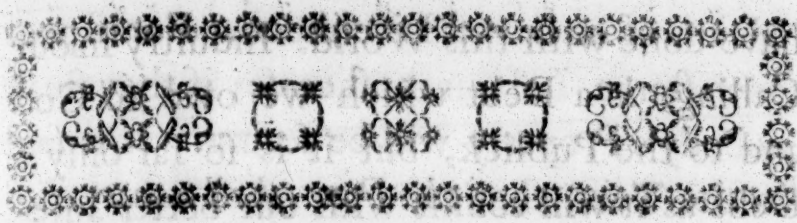
God's Providence hath not placed in a Capacity to make a sufficient Provision for themselves. We are not then to decline any reasonable Means of acquiring Wealth, which the Providence of God puts into our Hands, merely because there is Hazard of our using it ill; for this is refusing to do God's Work. If he blesteth us with a moderate Competency only, we may be allowed to be best pleased, as we are in the safest Way; but if he crowns our Industry beyond our Wishes, the proper Conduct is not to despise the Gift, but to be watchful against the Abuse of it; and if we will do our best, we shall not miscarry; and the more is our Virtue, the greater will be our Reward.----But this is a Point upon which much Caution may not seem to be needful. All Men see the Dangers of Wealth; but every one thinks himself qualified to avoid them and to separate the Good from the Bad? Wise are the Ways of Providence! Had it been otherwise, more than half the World would have been asleep: But it will not be unnecessary to guard against the other Extream. To which Purpose I observe,

3. That

3. That the Difficulties which attend a high Station in Life, are a very strong Argument against Anxiety and an immoderate Pursuit of Riches. For how know we but that Providence may designedly keep us low, *seeing* that we are not qualified for greater Things; and that if he were to send us more Wealth, it would prove a Snare to our everlasting Ruin? It is not every one that can fill a high Station with Propriety and Decency; and when Riches prove too great a Burden for the Shoulders that are to bear them, there is not surely upon Earth a severer Curse. If God would punish a bad Man, he could not do it more effectually, than by making him rich. To have Money and not to have a Heart to make Use of it; to starve in the Midst of Plenty; to tremble at every gathering Cloud of Adversity; to shun every Man who may chance to cost us a Shilling, as if he were a Thief and a Robber; or to run through all the Drudgeries of Intemperance and Excess, without any comfortable Hopes from hereafter, is a most miserable State! And who can be assured what Change in his Mind, a Change in his Circumstances would produce?

duce? We see many who behaved well in a low Condition; who when they grow rich and great, presently grow intoxicated, and know neither God nor Man, nor themselves. We should all of us have such a Sense of God and his Providence as to believe that he best knows what is best and fittest for us; and he that bears with him this humble Spirit will receive with Thankfulness what God sends, nor look with an envious Eye at Things which are beyond his Reach. It is not likely that a Man should use Riches well, who pursues them with too much Eagerness. The Hand that gathers too fast cannot be liberal. And if we use not Riches as we ought to use them, we had much better be without them. There is, no Doubt, a Care due to the Things which concern the Body. Every one's natural Wants will shew him this; and he that neglects to provide himself with Necessaries, willfully exposeth himself to Temptation. So doth he whose *Eye is not satisfied with Riches*, and can see no End of all his Labours. We are not bound, as I have said before, to stop just where mere Necessity stops; yet there is a Time (and every wise Man will find it) when it is fit for him to

have done with this World. Industry in our Calling, is a Debt which we owe to God and to the Publick, but it is so far only a Debt as it will consist with our better Interest. And therefore when the Increase of Wealth begins to incumber the Mind too much, or Age and Infirmities creeping on, shall admonish us of our approaching End; we are to look upon ourselves as having done the Work that Providence has assigned us, and to have one single Care only left, so to dispense these earthly Treasures, as to gain an Interest in the heavenly. No Man in his warmest Pursuits after earthly Things ought ever to lose Sight of the heavenly Prize, and no good Man can. To love this World in subserviency to the next, is the Spirit that sanctifies all our Care, and distinguishes the Steward of God from an Earth-worm. But some Pause, some Interval there should be, between our leaving this World and our Entrance upon the next; the better to prepare us for that great Change: That loose and disengaged from the World and all its Concerns, we may receive our last Summons with Chearfulness, and cast off this Vail of Flesh, like a worn out Garment.



S E R M O N VII.



DEUTERONOMY XV. 11.

For the Poor shall never cease out of the Land. Therefore I command thee saying: Thou shalt open thine Hand wide unto thy Brother, to thy Poor and to thy Needy in thy Land.

S the reciprocal Discharge of the Duties between Rich and Poor, very nearly affect the Peace and good Order of the World, it hence becomes a proper Subject of civil Laws; and in this Light I shall consider the Subject at present. I must here be obliged to repeat some general Principles, to make my Way to the Matter that lies before me.

The first Thing that Society should take care of is, that every Man may have the

Means of an honest Livelihood. For if poor Men starve, Labour must cease; if they steal, nobody's Property will be secure. It is said in the Text, that *the Poor shall never cease out of the Land*; and it is well for their rich Neighbours that they shall not. For if they *were* to cease, every Man's Wealth would be just what his own Hands could bring in; and to *have* much, would be nothing more than to *labour* much. The very Distinction and Privilege of a rich Man lies in this, that he hath *that* which will purchase for him the Labour of another, to furnish him with the several Accommodations of Life. Take away then the Hands that are to work, and the Distinction will cease. There will be none rich, because there are none poor.

All this shews the necessary Dependance that there is between the Rich and the Poor; and from these Considerations it appears to be the Interest of Society; to provide for the Support and Maintenance of poor Men, in ascertaining those Supplies by Law, which Religion leaves to private Discretion: And if the Poor have an Expectancy upon the Rich for a Maintenance; it will follow that the Rich must have a Demand upon the Poor for their Labour;

and

and that the same Laws of Society which provide that the Rich shall not be wanting on their Part; may and ought to provide likewise that the Poor shall not be wanting on theirs. If a poor Man refuses to work when he is able, the Laws of Society may punish him for his Idleness. So if a poor Man spends his Money extravagantly; the Law may controul him. Why? why because if the poor Man wants, the Publick must maintain him. Idleness and Extravagancy are bad in all; but till they become a Publick Grievance, or are likely to be so, the Law hath nothing to do with them. I say *are likely* to be so; for Society, in such Cases, acts upon the common Principle of Self-Defence; and Self-Defence, as well guards against Mischief visibly impending, as repels it when the Assault is actually made. Poor Men therefore should not think themselves hardly dealt with because they are liable to those Checks in the Disposal of their Time and Substance, which the Rich are not. When a rich Man wastes his Estate he spends his own; and if he grows poor it is not often that he wants Bread. But when a poor Man squanders away his Earnings which should maintain his Family and keep them from the Parish, he spends every

Man's Money upon whom the Burden may chance to fall.

Thus stands the State of the Poor as it respects publick Societies in a general View, and it is upon these Principles that our Laws relating to the Maintenance and Government of the Poor are founded. To give a particular Detail of these Laws, falls not within my Province: But, it may not be either useless or improper to point out the main Scope and Design of these Laws; that both those who are in, and those that are under Authority may be reminded of their Duties, and it may appear to what Causes we are to ascribe those Disorders among the Poor which are every where, with too much Justice, complained of. And,

I. As a Foundation of the Whole, all Parishes are bound to *set their Poor at work*, and to administer *necessary Relief to those that are not able to work*. * The Law goes as far as common Sense and Reason will suffer it to go. For if Laws should extend the Maintenance of the Poor beyond necessary Relief, there would be no knowing

* Stat. 43. Eliz. Chap. 2.

knowing where to stop. But, to qualify the Poor even for this necessary Relief, the Law says all that can work, and (as it is to be understood) have no other visible Way of maintaining themselves, may be compelled to work; and fit it is it should be so. For some Tempers are so sluggish, that they will starve out of mere Laziness; and there are Thousands who would trust to Chance for a Livelihood rather than work if they could help it. In the one Case, the Publick would be deprived of those Hands which in some way or other might usefully be employed: In the other it would be subject to a Nuisance. For those who trust to Chance for a Livelihood have but two Chances. They must either beg or steal.

II. The Law here supposes every poor Person as abiding in his proper Parish, and this is provided for by the Laws against *Vagrancy*, by which all common Beggars are liable to Correction. It was necessary that after Laws for the Maintenance of the Poor were established, the Practice of begging should be restrained. Because if poor Persons abide not in their own Parishes, their Parishes can neither set them to

I 4 work,

work, nor give them Maintenance when they are disabled---But if they can maintain themselves (you will say) without coming to a Parish for Help, why should they be hindered?---Right, if they can maintain themselves honestly. But common begging is not an honest Trade. For who ever begs, suggests (for the most Part more than tacitly) that he is in Want, and unable otherwise to provide himself with Maintenance; upon a Presumption of which it is that another thinks himself concerned to relieve him. But barring Exceptions upon particular Cases, this, as Matters now stand, cannot honestly be suggested. For if he is able to work (as these common Beggars most frequently are) he has his Maintenance in his own Hands; if not, the Law has provided a Maintenance for him. Common begging, has always more or less been a Fraud upon the Publick; Men pretending to be in Want, who either are not, or who would not be in Want if they would do their Duties, and extorting Money (as it were) from the Honest and Industrious, by applying to their Compassion, as Highway-men do by applying to their Fears. Upon the Experience

dence of which it was, that Society has thought it better to take upon themselves the Burden of maintaining the disabled Poor, that to indulge a Liberty so liable to be abused, and in its Consequences so prejudicial to the publick Weal, which must always suffer in Proportion as the Poor put themselves out of the Way of honest Industry; especially if Charity fails, (as it often does) in which Case there are but two Alternatives left, either to steal or starve.

III. Nor are our Laws unmindful to set a Guard about those Avenues which lead to Poverty, viz. *Gaming, Drunkenness, and Leudness*; to prevent which they have a watchful Eye, upon Places of idle Resort, which serve to draw in disorderly Persons to waste their Time and their Money. So that upon the Whole you may observe that our Laws exactly fall in with the common Sense and Reason of Mankind.---But *quid Leges sine moribus?* What are Laws good for that nobody minds? In respect to those Laws which order a Maintenance for the Poor, much needs not be said. For Poverty is urgent, and the Means

Means of Relief, are so easy to come at (as indeed they *should* be) that perhaps it is not often that poor Men are denied such Assistance from their respective Parishes as it is fit for poor Men to expect. If at any Time there is a Neglect in the proper Officers, in receiving the Complaints of the Poor, and in ministering to them such Supplies as are suitable to their Necessities; if they find Means to brow-beat and terrify their little Neighbours, or are able by Fraud or Artifice to evade or pervert the Law: Let those who are guilty of such Abuses know that they are Debtors, much to the Poor, much to the Society, and much to God. If through Want of necessary Relief, poor Men are forced to steal; theirs is the Theft who ought to have relieved them: If they perish, their Blood shall be required.

But Cases of this Sort, I hope, do not often happen. I wish the same Care was taken about the Execution of that Branch of our Laws, which corrects the Vices of the Poor. It is this which gives Life and Effect to all the rest, and without which publick Provisions will soon degenerate from their first Intention, and become a
publick

publick Mischief. For these Provisions weaken those natural Checks which deter Men from Vice; and if the Law gives no Strength to ballance on the other Side, the larger the publick Provisions are, the faster and the wider will Vices spring. Upon this Foot it is impossible that Society should long stand its Ground. For whence have rich Men the Power of assisting the Poor? Is it not from their Riches? And whence comes Wealth but from the Labour and Industry of the Poor? But in Proportion as Vice encreases (as it for ever will if it meets with no Checks) Industry must fail, and Want will grow more clamorous, whilst the Means of relieving it, will every Day grow to be more scanty. And what can this end in but the Dissolution of Government!

Wherever the Blame lies; whether it be that Corruption has made us degenerate, and careless; or that Faction and Party Disputes, have tied up the Hands of Justice; or that by the shameful Connivance (perhaps Encouragement) of Men in Authority, the Taxes laid upon the Instruments of Excess, are accepted as a Kind of Composition for Liberty for every Man
to

to be as extravagant and vicious as he is disposed; whether any or all these (the sure Symptoms of a weak and sickly State) have been the Cause or Causes; the Effect is certain, that our Laws relating to the Correction of Vice, are extremely ill executed; in consequence of which, the Poor are grown to be so burdensome in many Parishes, that we scarce know how to supply their Wants fast enough: Which has introduced a Necessity of applying to the more wealthy, for stated, voluntary Contributions, to supply the Deficiencies of the publick Rates. Such Helps are much to be commended in Cases of present Distress, which stand exempted from all common Rules. But true Policy and Religion too, will direct us to look before us, and to think of some Method (if such Method is to be found) so to correct the Disorders among the Poor, that such Helps may grow less necessary. For it is much better to prevent Want, than it is to relieve it. The Son of Sirach gives this Advice, Ecclus. xii. 1. &c. *When thou wilt do good, KNOW TO WHOM thou doest it; so shalt thou be thanked for thy Benefit.* He adds---*Give to the Godly Man and help not a Sinner*

Sinner least be over master thee thereby. The Rule is not to be rigidly urged in all Cases; but in general the Advice is good; and no Nation, perhaps, is a stronger Example of it than ourselves. If any where Charities (or what are so called) are even profuse, it is here; but no where is there a more disorderly and ungovernable Poor. One publick Charity treads upon the Heels of another; but the more we give the more is still wanted. If we are to go on in this Way, the Wealth of the whole Nation will not serve, and the Poor will soon become *our Masters.* What then do I say? Do I condemn these Charities? No. But I condemn that faulty Indulgence, which neglects to make use of that Power which the Law puts into our Hands to guard against this Mischief, which throws a Disgrace upon all our publick Provisions. Charity, in its natural Place and Order, does not go before as a leading Principle, but follows Industry as her Handmaid and Assistant; and when Industry is enforced by the publick Discipline, whilst the one ministers to the present Distress, the other guards against future Encroachments, by lessening the Number of those that want; and this will
confine

confine the Calls of the Poor within reasonable Bounds. But if you so provide for the Poor as to encrease their Numbers; you cut up the very Ground upon which Charity stands, which must always fail more or less as the Means of Relief grow to be disproportionate to the Wants to be relieved: And this will be the Case, if attending wholly to the Wants of the Poor, no care is taken to pluck up the bitter Root from whence they spring. The Vices of the Poor, are not a Reason why they should be suffered to perish; but it is very necessary that in some Way or other they be made very sensibly to feel the Consequences of them.

To go one Step farther. As a Sense of Religion is the best Security of Government; nothing can be more worthy of the publick Care, than the early Education of Youth in sober and Christian Principles. The Use of this is so sensibly felt in all private Families, that no Parent, who has Abilities for it, ever neglects to put his Children under proper Instructors, to acquaint them with the Knowledge of God, and by proper Discipline to form them into good Manners; without which Care, Man
will

will come out a more mischievous Creature, than the Beast of the Field. It compleats the Wretchedness of the poor Man's Condition, when he is able to provide neither for the bodily Wants of his Children, nor for their spiritual Improvement; and as Charity naturally directs every humane Mind, to administer to the Wants of the Poor in the one Case, it will do so likewise to give the proper Assistance in the other. It was from the general Sense and Conviction of this, that Charities of this Sort have made their Way through most Parts of this Kingdom.--- But with what *Success*? may some one ask. With what *Encouragement*? The proper, genuine, Fruit of a religious Education, is a religious Behaviour. It is what every Man as naturally and reasonably expects as he does a Crop of Corn when he sows Seed in the Earth; and when the Produce answers to Expectation, no Man ever grudges the Pains and Expence of Seed and Tillage. But how stands the Case here? Do we see that orderly Behaviour among the Poor, that might reasonably be expected, considering the Sums that are yearly spent in the Maintenance of Charity-Schools?

Schools? The Answer to this Question has been already given; and it falls on the unfavourable Side. But it would be judging very ill to have, upon this Account only, a worse Opinion of these Provisions; since we see in a Multitude of Instances, the very best and most necessary Means defeated by intervening Causes. You must plough and sow your Lands or you can have no Crop. But when you have done this you will in vain expect Fruit if (according to our Saviour's Comparifon) *the Fowls of the Air devour the Seed, or Weeds or Thorns spring up and choke it.* The Cases agree: For the Heart of Man is the natural Soil in which alone Virtue can grow; and early Instruction is its proper Culture. But the best Education will fail of its good Effects, if care be not taken to remove those Impediments, which, in the future Progress of Life, will hinder the Growth and Increase of Virtue. Childhood is the beginning of Life; and the Instructions of our younger Years, can do no more than lay a Foundation for Virtue. But when a Foundation is well laid, many things may happen to spoil the Building.---And what are these?---It is a Question worth asking and considering.

And

And you need not go far for an Answer.
The Causes are near at hand.

When poor Children are taken from School they are next disposed of in private Families; either as Servants or Apprentices; and a great deal will depend upon the Care that is taken of them when they come there. If the Master or Mistress are bad themselves, you are not, ordinarily, to expect that they of the Household should be better. For Instruction and Discipline will do nothing, without Perseverance till we grow fit to govern ourselves, and the Heart be established in virtuous Habits: And if to the Want of this Care, you add the Influence of bad Examples (which generally go together) young Persons will soon forget the Lessons they were taught at School, and run insensibly into all Kinds of Extravagancy. Here it is that the Mischief lies. We live in bad Times, when Religion is little minded among the better Sort; and when those who should correct Vice in their Families, are the Examples of it themselves. All Men are too apt to follow bad Examples; but the Poor are seldom the first Authors of them, or if they are, they are not considerable enough to do

much Mischief. But when the great Ones lead the Way, or give countenance to Vice, the common Herd will follow; and when Vice grows to be national, it will and must have a very bad Effect upon every kind of Education, from the poor Child that is maintained by Charity, upwards to the Sons and Daughters of Nobles. What then? Is Education wholly to be laid aside? Will you neglect to send your Children to School, and give them up to the Guidance of their own Wills? If this suits not You it will suit nobody else; and you will stand as ill excused, in refusing to assist the Poor in the Education of their Children, as you would do if you should refuse to defray the Expences that are necessary towards the Instruction of your own Family. Lay down this as a first Principle, that good Education is a necessary Point at all Events to be secured; and the natural Consequence will then be, that we are to do our best, and leave the Success to God, who best knows what it is fit for him to permit, and what to restrain, and who will judge us, not according to the *real* Good we do, but, according to the Will and Spirit with which we attempt it. But there is one good Use
which

which we may, and should, make of this Objection; which is to consider how much it concerns us all to amend our Lives, and to make ourselves the Patterns of good Things; to our Servants, to our Children, and to all about us; and how heavy will be our Guilt when it shall be laid to our Charge, that we have not only been wicked ourselves, but by our Wickedness have defeated the best Methods that God hath provided for the general Safety, and been the Occasion of the Destruction of Thousands!

I have gone through those several Sorts of Charities which come under the Class of publick, stated Provisions. The Field is large and affords great Scope for the Exercise of Humanity. And yet *shew I unto you a more excellent Way*, in PRIVATE ALMS-GIVING; which I call more excellent, not to disparage publick Provisions, but because it is wider in its Extent and Operations, and less liable to be abused. There are a Variety of Cases to which publick Provisions cannot reach, and which private Charity will easily find. Be then your own Stewards. *Know to whom you do good*; and instead of throwing away your
K 2 Money

Money upon idle Vagrants, look out among your poor Neighbours. Mark the Honest, Frugal, and Industrious; and when you find Things strait and pressing, drop in something to give them Ease and Enlargement. There is something beyond bare Necessaries, with which every good Man would wish the honest Poor to be provided; and they have Reason to expect it from us. They are our Drudges; and what if we pay them for their Labour? There will always be something behind for which we cannot pay them otherwise than by Kindness and good Will. If you would know what this is, the very Walls and Stones about you will speak it. See your stately Palaces! Your splended Tables! Your rich Furniture! Your costly Attire! --- every thing that makes up the Pomp and Pride of Life, and distinguishes a rich from a poor Man. *Their* Hands have prepared all these Things for your Use, with no Gain to themselves but barely to live. *Theirs* is the Labour; yours the Enjoyment.

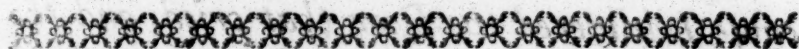
Methinks the Pleasure of this Kind of Charity is enough to recommend it to us. We have all of us Bowels. We know what it is to hunger, and thirst and be naked;

naked; and there are few with whom Life passes on so smoothly as not to pinch in some Point or other. Carry these Thoughts; carry these Feelings with you into the poor Man's Cottage; see him with his Wife and Children about him, eating their coarse but cleanly Food, and rising from a scanty Meal to go forth again to their Labour; and try if you can resist the Temptation to give; and whether a small Pittance of your Substance thus laid out will not be amply recompensed to you, by the Satisfaction you will receive from having made Plenty at a poor Man's Table, and causing Joy to break forth and shine in the Faces of a whole Family! --- But it has its Advantages too. For no rich Man who is a Benefactor to the Neighbourhood where he dwells, ever fails of the proper returns of Respect and Gratitude. Such as these are honoured and revered as Gods in this lower World, and carry an Awe and Command with them which will have a greater Influence upon the Poor, to keep them to the Duties of their Station, than the Authority of Laws and the Dread of Executions. What a lovely Picture of the great and good

Man have we in the Book of Job, Chap. 29? Who speaking of himself in the Days of his Prosperity says; *when I went out to the Gate through the City --- the young Men saw me and hid themselves, and the Aged arose and stood up --- When the Ear heard me then it blessed me; and when the Eye saw me it gave witness to me; because I delivered the Poor that cried, and the Fatherless and him that had none to help him. The Blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the Widows Heart to sing for Joy. I put on Righteousness and it clothed me; my Judgment was as a Robe and a Diadem. I was Eyes to the blind, and Feet to the lame. I was a Father to the Poor, and the Cause which I knew not I searched out. There is nothing to be added to this excellent Character, and the best Advice I can give upon it is, to say to you in the Words of our blessed Saviour; *Go thou and do likewise.**



S E R M O N VIII.



MATTHEW xiii. 44.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Treasure hid in a Field; the which when a Man hath found he hideth; and, for the Joy thereof, he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that Field.

*****T**HERE are two Parables in this Chapter, both intended to the same Purpose; to wit, to shew the great Value and Excellency of the Gospel. One I have read to you in the Text; the other follows in the next Verses; *The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Merchant-man seeking goodly Pearls; who when he hath found one Pearl of great Price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.*

The *Treasure hid in the Field* in the first Parable, and the *Pearl of great Price* in the second; both represent the Gospel as of the greatest Benefit to those who shall embrace it: And the Forecast and Diligence used in each Case, to make the valuable Commodity his own, describes the Attention that every one to whom the Gospel is made known, should pay to the gracious Offer; which ought to be such as prudent Men are used to bestow, not upon Trifles, but upon Things of the utmost Consequence and Concern. He that buys a Field, buys every Thing it contains; and if a Man by Chance, should discover a Mine of Gold in his Neighbour's Land, what would he do? Our Saviour here represents him as *hiding it*, that is, as concealing the Discovery, and going craftily to work, and selling all that he hath to buy that Field. If you say this is not honest; you cannot say, that it is not agreeable to the Practice of the wise Men of this World. But the Honesty of the Conduct is out of the Question; and as in the Case of the unfaithful Steward (recorded Luke xvi.) not the Knavery, but the Vigilance and Forecast of the Man (in the

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the *Abstract*) is set forth to us, as an Example for our Imitation, so it is here; and the Truth intended to be conveyed to us is, that to be entitled to the Benefits of the Gospel, is worth the greatest Care we can bestow, and the greatest Price we can pay for it. This manifestly suggests a Superiority in Christ above all other Teachers. If Pearls were as common as Stones in the Street, nobody would value them: And if Christ had offered no more to his Followers than any common Teacher; he would have deserved no greater Regard than common Teachers could challenge. Let us consider then where the Distinction lies; and let Christ (as it is meet) be his own Interpreter.

The Son of Man (says he) *is come to save that which was lost.* Matth. xviii. 11.

-----*The Son of Man came to give his Life a Ransom for many.* Chap. xx. Ver.

28.-----*I am the living Bread which came down from Heaven; if any Man eat of this Bread he shall live for ever; and the Bread that I give is my Flesh, which I will give for the Life of the World.* Joh. vi. 51.

These Passages shew; that the proper, specifick Distinction of Christ's Character was,

was, not that he was a Preacher of Righteousness, but that he was the Saviour and Redeemer of the World. Noah was a Preacher of Righteousness; and so were many of the antient heathen Philosophers: But none of them were the Redeemers of Mankind. Not one of them ever took upon himself this Character; which belongs to Christ and to him only. Man was created for immortal Happiness. This was lost by Transgression and this Loss Christ came to restore, by opening the Way to Repentance and Remission of Sins. *Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer----and that Repentance and Remission of Sins should be preached in his Name, among all Nations.* Luke xxiv. 46. So that the proper End and Use of the Gospel was, not to promulge a new Law to Mankind, but, to offer Peace and Reconciliation with God to those who had sinned against, and stood condemned by the old one; that is, all Mankind. This is the Principle upon which St. Paul sets out in his Epistle to the Romans. He supposes, that all Mankind whether Jews or Gentiles (antecedently to the Coming of Christ) were under

der a Law; as undoubtedly they were. This Law he charges not with Defect or Insufficiency; but he charges all with being Sinners against the Law, and as such, under Wrath and Condemnation, from which they could not be released and reinstated in God's Favour, otherwise than by Repentance and Faith in Jesus Christ. This was the Message that the Apostles were to bear throughout the World. St. Peter preaching to the Jews, says that God had *made that same Jesus, whom they had crucified both Lord and Christ.* Act. ii. 36,----That he had *exalted him with his right Hand to be a Prince and a Saviour for to give Repentance unto Israel, and Forgiveness of Sins.* Chap. v. Ver. 31. To the Gentiles he saith, *Him God raised up---and commanded us to preach unto the People, and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the Prophets Witness, that through his Name whosoever believeth in him, shall receive Remission of Sins.* Chap. x. Verse 40, &c. Therefore (I say) the Gospel was not an original Publication of God's Law to Man; but it was a Dispensation of Grace and Mercy

to repenting Sinners. This was the *Treasure*, the *Pearl of great Price* that Christ opened to his Followers; and because he was the first that opened it, he calls it a *hidden Treasure*. The Law of Moses had shadowed it out; the Prophets had darkly foreshewed it; but Christ was the first who set it in clear and open Day-light.

Placing the Gospel in this Point of View; it fully explains the Case of Cornelius, the Roman Centurion; and, in this, the State of the whole Heathen World. Humanely speaking he was a good Man: For thus the History characterizes him. He was a *devout Man, and one that feared God, with all his House; which gave much Alms to the People, and prayed to God alway.* Act. x. 1, &c. Yet, his Piety notwithstanding, he was sent to St. Peter to hear *Words* from him, *whereby he and all his House should be saved.* Chap. xi. Ver. 14. The Matter was plainly this: Cornelius, with all his Virtues was not perfect, but lay under the common Sentence denounced against Transgressors; and therefore wanted the Seal of Reconciliation; which the Apostle gave him, by preach-
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ing Remission of Sins through Christ, and receiving him into his Church by Baptism.

The Case was just the same with Respect to the Jews. For St. Paul speaking of himself says, *If any other Man thinketh he hath whereof he might trust in the Flesh, I more. Circumcised the eighth Day; of the Stock of Israel; of the Tribe of Benjamin; an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the Law a Pharisee; concerning Zeal persecuting the Church; touching the Righteousness which is in the Law, blameless.* Phil. iii. 4---7. Yet, notwithstanding all this legal Merit, the Apostle knew that he was not able to justify himself before God; and therefore he adds---*What Things were Gain to me, those I counted Loss for Christ; yea doubtless, and I count all Things but Loss, for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord---and do count all Things but Dung, that I may win Christ; and be found in him, not having mine own Righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the Faith of Christ; the Righteousness which is of God by Faith.* Ver. 7---10.

But here, perhaps, some modern Reasoner will step forth and ask, why are we
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sent to Christ to find out a Remedy which Nature has in her own Hands? Does not every one's common Sense tell him, that God will accept of repenting Sinners?----- These Men put the Cheat upon themselves; and it is easy to see how. They have been bred up in this Notion; and it is seen in other Cases, that when Points of Revelation (in themselves *agreeable* to Reason) are established by general Authority, and by Education and Custom are become familiar, they pass themselves upon the Mind as natural Principles. But whatever these Reasoners may fancy, (who seldom look to the Bottom of Things) it is certain that the ablest of the Antient Heathen Philosophers were of a different Opinion. They saw plainly enough that Mankind were under a Law; they saw also the Justice of God in punishing Sin; but how, or by what Means God would be reconciled to Sinners they saw not, and some of them have both confessed and lamented their Ignorance on this Head. This is the Gap which mere natural Religion has always been labouring to fill up, and always labouring in vain. But Christ hath done that for us which Nature could not do. And what do you say? Will you
tell

tell him, that you have no Need of his Assistance? Is there that Point in the World upon which a Man would more desire to act with certain Assurance than this, *What must I do to obtain eternal Life?* And does Nature speak so fully to this Question, as to exclude the Use of all other Evidence? You cannot say it. Nature may furnish us with Hopes, (or to speak the utmost) with Probabilities; but farther than this, she cannot go. Why then do you cavil? You might except against the Authority that makes the Offer if there was Reason for it; but against the Offer itself you cannot except; which is full of Grace and Condescension, and must be comfortable to all but those, who for Reasons (as it may justly be apprehended) not very commendable, have taken up a general Dislike to the Gospel, and want a Handle to abuse it.

To leave such as these to their own vain Conceits, let me now apply myself to the serious Christian. You see your Privilege in Christ. The Way to eternal Life is once more laid open to you. But mind the Condition upon which this *Treasure*, this *Pearl of great Price* is offered to you

you. You must *sell all you have to purchase it*. There is an Instance in Scripture of one, of whom this was literally exacted; that young Man I mean, who asked the Question, *What shall I do to be saved?* Our Saviour's Answer was----Go *and sell that thou hast and give to the Poor, and thou shalt have Treasure in Heaven, and come and follow me*. But he did not like the Bargain. The Terms were too hard for him. *He went away sorrowful, for he had great Possessions*. Matt. xix. 21, 22. The Apostles did the reasonable Thing. They were not rich; but they *left their All* (whatever it was) *to follow Christ*, as it was necessary they should; for the Work to which they were called demanded their whole Attention. They must either have left their *all*, or they must have left Christ. You see their Choice and let it be your Example too; and when worldly Prospects lie before you, to obstruct the Way to Salvation, turn away your Eyes from the tempting Bait; renounce them all rather than give up your Interest in Christ. Whatever it be, that is dear and valuable to us in this World, be it Houses or Lands or any Thing else that separates us from the Love

Love of Christ, if we are wise we shall be ready to forego it for the Gospel-Sake. So says our Saviour. *If thy right Eye offend thee; pluck it out, and cast it from thee; For it is profitable for thee that one of thy Members should perish, and not that thy whole Body should be cast into Hell. And if thy right Hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee, that one of thy Members should perish, and not that thy whole Body should be cast into Hell.* Matt. v. 29, 30. The Advice is repeated to give it the greater Force. But what does he mean by *pulling out an Eye*; or *cutting off a Hand*? Neither Eye nor Hand can hurt us if we use them well. But the Eye may be made the Instrument of Lust, or Covetousness or Envy. The Hand may be employed in Fraud or Violence. These are the Things that are to be cut off and cast away; for these are the Things which will bring us to the Damnation of Hell. And yet the Eye that lusts; the Eye that covets; the Eye that envies; may, many Times, as easily be plucked up by the Roots, as the Passions it creates, cured or resisted: And the Hand cut off with as

little or less Pain, than it can forbear to cheat or to steal. But all this must be done, if we hope to be saved by the Gospel. And is it not worth the while? Can a wise Man stay one Moment to deliberate upon such a Question as this? But look into the World and see how few act as if they were influenced by such Sentiments as these! Look into the Play-houses, the Gaming-rooms, and those (almost numberless) Assemblies for Card-playing, and other vain and idle Amusements, and you will see Crouds of those, who instead of selling all they have to purchase the invaluable Treasure, will spend all they have to lose it! Consider whether those who habituate themselves to these Things, can have either Leisure or Inclination to enter into themselves, and bestow a serious Thought upon Religion and a future State. Something, no doubt may be done for Form's Sake, and to save outward Appearances: But what can be done to touch the Heart, whilst there are so many foreign Objects perpetually at hand to divert the Attention, and to drive out every profitable Thought, without suffering it to lay hold and take root in the Mind?

Mind? This (in our Saviour's Comparison) is sowing Seed *by the Way's Side, which is trodden under Foot, and the Fowls of the Air devour.*

What is this World and all we can make of it? It is an airy flitting Provision! A Span filled up with Pleasures as unsatisfactory as they are short! Appetite craves and we satisfy it: It craves again, and we indulge it again. This is the Sum and Substance of this World's Good. But what is this perpetual Rotation of Pain and Pleasure? This running off from one Gratification to another, the last of which leaves us as little satisfied as the first? It is the Life of Children not of Men; and if you would frame to yourselves a just and a perfect Image of the Man of this World, you must represent to yourself a Child eager after Toys and Rattles, and a Stranger to every Thing that is worthy the Pursuit of a reasonable Creature. I speak this upon the most favourable Supposition you can put, which is, that the World goes on well, and prosperous with us; and that nothing happens to interrupt us in our Enjoyments. But if we will consider the many Rubs and Hindrances that we are li-

able to in our worldly Pursuits ; it will bring the Reckoning much lower, and more fully convince us, how unfit a Thing it is to make this World our Trust and Stay ; and how much it concerns us to to be laying in for something more firm and stable. Is Wealth our Aim ? How few come at it ! Would we have Honour or Power ? They are not more within our Reach. Will a moderate Sufficiency content us ? We cannot be secure even of that. For Success does not always favour the most provident and industrious. Hidden unseen Causes often defeat our best concerted Measures ; or when we are accommodated according to our Wishes, Poverty may lie in Ambuscade and strip us in an Instant : To all which we should never forget to add the great Uncertainty of human Life, and that Death puts an End to all our Devices ; so that neither the giddy Consumer, nor the crafty Gatherer, nor the ambitious Enterprizer, can tell what he is doing, and whether, whilst he is flattering himself with Years of Enjoyment to come, the very next Moment may not close the whole delusive Scene, and bring him before

fore the Presence of his great Judge, to receive the Reward of his Deeds!

Since then this World is not to be trusted; let us draw from the whole this just and reasonable Conclusion, that our true Happiness lies not here, but in that Place which Christ hath opened to us, the heavenly Kingdom. Him let us follow with Faith and a pure Conscience; cutting off every Lust which besets us, and removing every stumbling Block, which may hinder us in our Speed to that blessed Place where we have a sure, never failing Treasure; which no Allay of Unhappiness can disturb!



S E R M O N IX.

ACTS v. 32.

*And we are his Witnesses of these Things,
and so also is the Holy Ghost, whom God
hath given to them that obey him.*

THESE Words are Part of St. Pe-
TER ter's Answer to the great Council
of the Jews, when he, with the
rest of the Apostles, were convened before
them to answer for themselves, why they
preached in the Name of Jesus. Their Plea
is the Divine Mission; *we ought to obey
God rather than Men.* Verse 29. The E-
vidences of their Mission was the Resur-
rection of Christ, whose Ministers they
were, as it follows. Verses 30, 31. *The
God of our Fathers raised up Jesus, whom
ye slew and hanged on a Tree. Him hath
God*

God exalted with his right Hand to be a Prince and a Saviour.-----The Certainty of these Facts (to wit, of the Resurrection of Christ and his Exaltation into Heaven) as to *themselves*, stood upon the Evidence of their own Senses. For it was to *them*, that Christ *shewed himself alive after his Passion*. Chap, i. Verse 3. It was in *their Presence*, and whilst they were *looking on*, that *he was taken up, and a Cloud received him out of their Sight*. Verse 9. But as to the Body of the Jewish Nation, *their Faith* was left to rest upon the Testimony of the Apostles, backed and supported by the Testimony of the Holy Ghost, as the Text sets forth. *And we are his Witnesses of these Things, and so also is the Holy Ghost whom God hath given to them that obey him.*

I shall make it my Business at this Time, to consider this twofold Testimony, the Testimony of the Apostles and the Testimony of the Holy Ghost; and shew what Weight there is in them to support the great Article of our Saviour's Resurrection. And as to the first, it hath in it all the Authority that human Testimony can have. For the Apostles having been most intimately and familiarly acquainted with Jesus during the Course of his Ministry on

Earth, were perfectly well qualified to know whether they saw him alive again, after his Crucifixion and Death, and if they saw him, they had the same Evidence that he was risen, as they had that he had ever been a living Man. -- But did they see him? So they tell us; and the Circumstances of their Story are such as (admitting them to be true) make it impossible to suppose that they could have been mistaken. They saw him not once but often: They not only saw him, but they ate with him and conversed with him. And what other Evidence have we than this, that there are any Persons living in the World besides ourselves? Or how do we know our Parents, our Children, or our Friends, but, by such Tokens as these? --- But the great Question here is; *are these Things so?* Might not the Apostles impose upon us, and report that they saw what indeed they saw not? If there is any reasonable Objection against the Certainty of Christ's Resurrection, here it must lie; and therefore let us consider this Matter carefully.

By all that we know of the Apostles of Christ by their History and Writings, they

they were plain honest Men, and so far they had a common Right to be believed in their Report. But the convincing Argument is, that they could be under no Temptation to invent such a Tale as this, if they had been capable of it. Their Prejudices and their Interests lay the other Way. The End of declaring Christ's Resurrection was to give Proof to his Title of being the Messiah of the Jews. Jesus took upon himself this Title whilst he was living; and for this it was that the Jews persecuted him and slew him. For though they looked for a Messiah, they looked not for such a one as he, who had declared that his *Kingdom was not of this World*. They expected an earthly Kingdom, and a Messiah that was to fight their Battles and subdue their Enemies. Jesus was but the Son of a Carpenter. No Soldier, but a Preacher of Righteousness; who taught them the Way, not how to be great and powerful in this World, but how to be happy in the next.

The Apostles were for a long Time full of the common Prejudices of their Country in this Respect; and though convinced by his Miracles that he was a Prophet, they be-
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came his Followers; were yet such Strangers to the true End of his Mission, that some of them were laying in very early for Posts of Honour and Promotion, to sit at his Right Hand or at his left, in his Kingdom. Matt. xx. 21. It is to this Notion (which stuck by them all the Time of our Saviour's Ministry) that we are to refer the Consternation they were under at Christ's Death; which seems, for the present, to have put a full Period to their Hopes. *We trusted* (say the two Disciples going to Emmaus) *that it had been he, which should have redeemed Israel* (Luke xxiv. 21.) intimating that now they had lost all Hopes, since they had seen their Master crucified and slain. Lost indeed, THESE Hopes were; and from this Time forward, we hear no more of them. But the Sequel shews that all Hopes were not lost; for they go out to preach the Gospel to all the World. And what do they talk of? Not of a TEMPORAL, but of a SPIRITUAL Kingdom. Not that Christ should redeem Israel; but that he should save the whole World,----that he was dead, and risen, and gone up into Heaven, and from thence should come again to judge the Quick, and the

the Dead. Whence (one may reasonably ask) this sudden Change in their Sentiments concerning the Nature of Christ's Kingdom? If you admit his Resurrection and what followed upon it, as laid down in the New Testament; all will be plain and easy. Christ had *opened their Understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures*; and placed them under the Guidance of the Holy Ghost for farther Instruction. But if nothing of this had happened (as nothing of this could have happened, if Christ was not raised) his Death must have concluded all Hopes at once, and left the Apostles absolutely without Ground to stand upon.

You will say perhaps, that the Apostles when they saw their Hopes of a temporal Deliverance, defeated by the Death of Christ; set up the Notion of a spiritual Kingdom in its stead, as that with which the Tale of the Resurrection would very well agree. But what Business, (I again ask) had they with this Tale of Christ's Resurrection? What End could they propose to themselves, by propagating such a Story? Their Hopes of a temporal Kingdom lay buried with him in his
Grave :

Grave: Hopes of a spiritual Kind they could have none; for these must have been founded upon the Reality of his Resurrection. The Apostles then are here supposed to have told a Lie, merely for lying Sake, without any Hopes of being believed, and (as will be seen presently) against all those Discouragements which are apt to work most forcibly upon human Nature. Whatever *their* Sentiments were, they could not alter the Opinion of the Jewish Nation, who still retained their old Prejudices; and looked for a temporal Kingdom and a temporal Christ, as their Children do to this very Day. How then were the Apostles to beat down this Opinion, and to introduce their own (as is now supposed) invented Notion of Christ's spiritual Kingdom? Why, by their own sole Authority. By reporting a Story of which it was impossible for them to give any Proof. They said that they had seen Jesus alive, and ascending up into Heaven, after he had been dead and was laid in the Grave. But the Jews, no Doubt, would have demanded Proof of so extraordinary an Assertion. And yet, if Jesus was not raised, Proof they could have none besides the bare Assertion

sertion of some other Disciples, who said they saw him too, but whose Authority would have been liable to the same Exception with their own.

We are now considering the Apostles as acting a Cheat; and therefore are not at Liberty to suppose, that they had the Evidence of Miracles to support their Testimony of Christ's Resurrection. But it may be said, that they pretended however, to work Miracles, and might hope to make good what was wanting in Proof, by such Impostures. But had not the Apostles already experienced the ill Success of such an Attempt in their Master's Case? He wrought or (as we must now say) pretended to work Miracles in Confirmation of the Testimony given by himself. But HIM they had seen crucified and slain. And could not they learn from hence, what they were to expect for themselves? If they wanted Caution on this Head, our Saviour had taken Care to give it them. *The Servant is not greater than the Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.* Joh. xv. 20. In Reason they could expect no better Treatment than their Master. In Fact and Experience they found

no better. Yet they persisted in their Story, and gave up their Lives rather than drop their Pretensions!

Can we conclude from hence, any Thing less than this, that the Apostles themselves were fully persuaded of the Truth of Christ's Resurrection? If such a Pledge as this will not prove a Man to be in earnest, nothing else possibly can. But if you allow this; you confess, in effect, that Christ was raised; For they had this Persuasion from the Testimony of their Senses. In many Cases, a Man's Persuasion concerning any Thing, is no Evidence that the Thing is true; because such Persuasion may be ill-grounded. For instance; if a Man should deny that there is a God, or a future State, or say that there is such a Place as Purgatory; and should submit to Punishment or Death rather than disavow such Belief; his Conduct would be a sufficient Proof of his Sincerity, but not of the Truth of his Opinion: Because these Things are not evident to Sense, but depend upon rational Deductions of the Mind in which he may possibly err. But if the Question was, whether an intimate Friend of mine were living or dead at such a Time, and I should

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aver that since that Time I saw and conversed with him at such a Place; that I ate and drank with him, or the like; and should be ready to suffer any Kind of Cruelty, rather than alter my Story: In this Case, as my Constancy would be a Proof of my Sincerity; so my Sincerity would shew the Fact to be true. Because though in Deductions of Reason, a Man may easily be mistaken, it will be presumed that he cannot err in Things which fall within the Notice of his Senses, and in which he pretends to have all the Evidence that Sense can give. What are we to believe, if we are *not* to believe *what our Eyes have seen, and what our Ears have heard, and what our Hands have handled?*

This is exactly the Case of the Apostles with Respect to Christ's Resurrection, as the History they have left of the Transactions of those Times report to us. So that this admitted, it must be confessed, that the Jews had all the Evidence of this Fact, that human Testimony could give them --- But why, you will ask, were they left to depend upon Testimony, when many of them as well as the Apostles, might have had the Evidence of their Senses? Jesus shewed himself

himself alive; *not unto all the People; not in common to all who had seen and knew him before his Death; but unto Witnesses chosen before of God.* This is the very Thing that causes Suspicion; that **THEY** only should be singled out to bear Witness of the Resurrection of Christ who were his Disciples and Friends, and who, consequently, if there was any Fraud in the Case, must be supposed to have been the Contrivers and Promoters of it.

It would not have been seasonable to have mentioned Objections to the Evidence of Christ's Resurrection, before the Evidence itself was set forth. And now the Evidence is laid open, you see plainly that the Objection comes too late. For to what Purpose is it to say, that if there was any Fraud in this Case, the Apostles were the Authors of it, and therefore, are an incompetent Evidence; when it appears beyond all Contradiction, that no Fraud was or could have been intended? If there had been apparently any Purposes to be served, by framing a Story of this Nature; this Circumstance, that no body was Witness of Christ's Resurrection besides themselves, would justly have rendered their Evidence

vidence justly suspicious. But where there were no Hopes of Honour, or Power, or Wealth, or any Thing which Men naturally covet; but a certain Prospect of Ruin and Destruction to all who should embark in a Cause so odious to the whole Jewish Nation: Friends or Foes; whoever or whatever they were who should bear Testimony to this Thing; stood all alike unsuspecting as to any Intention of Fraud; and in all other Respects, no one can deny that his Friends and Intimates were the fittest Persons that could be chosen; for they who best knew him, when he was living, were best able to testify that he was raised from the dead.---But would not the Evidence have been more full and satisfactory to that Generation of Men, if Jesus had shewed himself to all in common, Enemies as well as Friends; and is it not reasonable and necessary to be supposed, that if Christ really was raised from the dead, God would have given them this Satisfaction?---There is no Doubt to be made but that those who saw Christ with their own Eyes after he was risen, had an Evidence of his Resurrection, higher in the Nature and Kind of it, than those who took it up-

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on the Report of others. But because all had not this Evidence, is it therefore a just Inference that none had, or (in other Words) that Christ was not raised? It is most certain, that all *cannot* have this Evidence. We, for Instance, at this Day, cannot have it. For if Christ should now come down from Heaven and appear among us a living Man, this would be no Proof to our Senses, that he was raised from the dead. It would be a Proof that he now is; but that he lived above seventeen hundred Years ago, and was put to Death by the Jews, could not be Matters evident to Sense, but must depend upon Testimony. And this is the Case of all who never saw Jesus alive, or who did not see him put to death; for none but those who were Eye-witnesses of both, could or can be Eye-witnesses of his Resurrection.

Since therefore in the Nature of the Thing, it was absolutely necessary, that the Resurrection of Christ, should (wherever it was to be received) GENERALLY rest upon Testimony, and not upon sensible Proof; I desire it may be considered, by what Right those few among the Jews, (for comparatively speaking, very few they were)

were) who were qualified to have been made Eye-witnesses, could challenge this Privilege. There is an evident Reason why the Apostles, and many other of Christ's Disciples were made Eye-witnesses. They were to be Witnesses to the rest of the World. The unbelieving Jews were not chosen to be Witnesses, nor as such were they qualified to be so.---But if they had seen (you will say) they would have believed, and might have been Witnesses.---Be it so. Shall not God chuse his own Instruments? Or would these late Converts have been fitter for this important Trust than those who had been his constant Disciples and Followers? But how know you that they would have believed if they had seen Christ after his Resurrection? They had seen what was little short of it; and yet they believed not. They had seen Christ whilst living, and had been Eye-witnesses to many of his wonderful Works; yet they crucified and put him to death. When he was dead, his Body was laid in a Sepulchre, under a Guard of their own placing: But this notwithstanding, the Body was gone on the third Day, by means which bespoke a Power more than human.

Thus far the Enemies of Christ were themselves Witnesses. In this last; in this sole Privilege they were not indulged, that of seeing Jesus with their own Eyes: And will any one take upon him to say, that it might not be wise and just in God to deny them that Satisfaction? Perhaps if they had seen they would not have believed. Perhaps they had made themselves unworthy, by standing out so long against Conviction, and at last, defiling their Hands in the Blood of the Son of God. But whether these, or any other were the Reasons; it can never appear half so clear, that, supposing Christ to have been raised, God ought to have given, and would have given the Jews this Satisfaction, as all the Circumstances attending the Testimony of the Apostles are convincing to prove, that their Testimony is true.

But it did not seem meet to the Wisdom of God to leave the Credit of so extraordinary an Event as this, to rest merely upon the Testimony of Men. And therefore before our Saviour would permit his Apostles to be Witnesses of his Resurrection, he bids them *wait for the Promise of*
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the Father, to wit, the Promise of the Holy Ghost. Acts i. 4. Ye shall receive Power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be Witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost Part of the Earth.

Verse 8. It was not long after, that the Promise was accomplished in that remarkable Descent of the Holy Ghost, whereof we have an Account in the next Chapter; by which the Apostles were endued with miraculous Gifts of various Kinds, that accompanied them in all their Travels; insomuch that whosoever heard their Testimony, saw also the Hand of God *working with them and confirming the Word.* Mark xvi. 20. This is what St. Peter in the Text means by the Testimony of the HOLY GHOST, which was indeed the Testimony of God himself, concurring with their Testimony, to convince all who heard and saw, that Jesus was risen from the Dead. This Testimony was necessary upon diverse Accounts. For in the first Place, though the Apostles were honest, undesigned Men, and therefore deserved Credit; yet they could be known to be such only by those who knew the Manner of their

Conversation, who were not many, nor those of great Repute; for they were Men of obscure Condition. In the next Place, the principal Evidence that the Apostles gave, or could give of the Sincerity of their Profession, was their Constancy even unto Death; which could not be seen in its full Light, till the Close of their Ministry, and that only by those (comparatively but few) who were Witnesses of their Conversation and of their Sufferings; and had all Men suspended their Belief, till they saw the End and Conclusion of Things, it is probable that very few would have been converted. Now the Testimony of the Holy Ghost supplied both these Defects; for it was an Evidence as well to those who knew not the Apostles, as to those who did know them; and it was an Evidence that demanded *immediate* Attention, without leaving Room for Doubt or Hesitation. But there is another Reason yet behind of no less Weight than these; and that is the extreme Backwardness in Mankind to believe Reports of this Nature, how well soever they may be attested. I do think it impossible to prove that the Notion of Apparitions is an Absurdity: And yet should
the

the honestest and most sensible Man upon Earth aver that he saw the Ghost of his Father, or of his Friend, there is not (it may be) one in a hundred that would believe him. The Case of the Resurrection is indeed a much stronger Case : For here the Apostles had the repeated Satisfaction of *all* their Senses, that it was he. *Behold my Hands and my Feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones as ye see me have.* Luke xxiv. 39. They are the Words of Christ to his Apostles, when upon his standing in the midst of them after his Resurrection, *they were terrified and affrightened, and supposed that they had seen a Spirit.* But though the Apostles were themselves fully satisfied, that what they saw was the real Body of Christ, and no Apparition, it would have been very hard for them to have satisfied the Gross of Mankind; if they had had nothing to have offered but their own naked Authority. A Fact so strange in its Nature, and which could borrow nothing to give it Credibility from the common Observation of Things, seemed to require the highest Testimony to gain it Admission; and this was the Testimony of God him-
M 4 self.

self. And well might all thenceforward receive the Apostles Testimony that Christ was raised, when they bore in their Hands, as it were, the Stamp and Seal of that very Power by which he was raised.

You have now seen upon what Foundation the Faith of those was built, who first of all received the Gospel from the Apostles Hands. The Resolution of our Faith at present is the same, with this single Difference, that whereas they were Eye and Ear-witnesses of this twofold Testimony, we receive it upon historical Credibility. They heard the Apostles declare that Christ was risen; they saw the Miracles which they wrought, and the Sufferings they underwent for the Truth's Sake; and therefore they believed: We believe upon the same Grounds, not manifested to our Senses; but recorded to us in the Scriptures. So that here is (with Respect to us) the Intervention of a Testimony merely human, to support the Reality and Certainty of the first original Testimony both human and divine. In the Nature of the Thing it could not otherwise be, unless it had pleased God to continue the Testimony of the Holy Ghost

Ghost by a perpetual Series of Miracles,
 to confirm the Truth of the Scripture
 History, as it heretofore confirmed the
 oral Testimony of the Apostles; which
 we cannot easily say how it might have
 been done, but which we certainly know
 has not been done; the Providence of
 God having thought it sufficient AT FIRST,
 to confirm the Faith by Miracles, and
 then to leave the Transactions of those
 Times to be handed down to Posterity
 by the common and ordinary Means of
 Conveyance. As God thought this to be
 sufficient, so we have abundant Reason
 to be satisfied, since our sacred Books have
 the same Characters of Truth, which
 all other Records of antient Times al-
 lowed and received as authentick have,
 and some which others of like Antiqui-
 ty have not. Yet this hath opened a
 wide Door to Unbelief in these latter
 Times. For as at first, Mankind would
 not (probably) have generally received
 the Testimony of the Apostles upon their
 own Authority, or without the Testimo-
 ny of the Holy Ghost, backing and con-
 firming it in the Miracles wrought by
 their Hands; so now, they will not ad-
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mit this divine Testimony upon the common Security of historical Evidence, that is they find it hard to believe that there were any such Miracles wrought in Confirmation of the Faith, as the Scriptures have recorded to us: Not that they have any Objection to offer against the Authority of these Books, to which all other antient Writings of the best Credit are not equally or (perhaps) more liable; but merely (as one would suppose) because they have not any Measure of Faith to bestow upon such Matters as these, to which we observe nothing correspondent in these Days. This is a Degree of Infidelity which will admit of no Cure by *our* Hands; and may God have Mercy upon all who are thus deeply infected! The wise Conduct in this Point, is to be content with the Light he has been pleased to give us; and since there is a Foundation left for a reasonable Faith, to demean ourselves as becomes those, who expect that he who died and rose again to save us, will one Day come again to judge us. There is Room enough for those to cavil and find Fault, who are so disposed; and there is Satisfaction for those who are willing to consider

consider Things in a candid and an equitable Light. This is the proper Trial of our Virtue ; this the Foundation of that Reward which is promised to Faith, as our Saviour intimated to his Apostle Thomas, who was full of that Kind of Scepticism, which many now-a-days boast of as their Glory, but for which he received from his Master the following Rebuke ; *Thomas because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed ; Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed !* Joh. xx. 29.



S E R M O N X.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 10, 11.

That I may know him, and the Power of his Resurrection, and the Fellowship of his Sufferings, being made conformable unto his Death;

If by any Means I might attain unto the Resurrection of the Dead.

THE Apostle a few Verses before had been speaking of the Advantages he was under as a Jew, and how little he now esteemed them being a Christian. *We are the Circumcision which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no Confidence in the Flesh.** By having no Confidence in the Flesh, he means,

not

* Verse 3.

not trusting to the Services of the Law of Moses (which he elsewhere stiles *the Law of a carnal Commandment*, * and *carnal Ordinances* †) for Justification and Acceptance with God. This appears from what follows. *If any other Man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the Flesh, I more. Circumcised the eighth Day; of the Stock of Israel; of the Tribe of Benjamin; an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the Law a Pharisee; concerning Zeal, persecuting the Church; touching the Righteousness which is of the Law blameless. ||* The general Meaning of which is, that in Point of legal Advantages, he was inferior to none; and that therefore if Justification was to be had by the Law, none had greater Reason to plead Justification from it than himself. But what says he? *What Things were Gain to me, those I counted lost for Christ --- for whom I have suffered the Loss of all Things, and do count them but Dung that I may win Christ; And be found in him not having mine own Righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the Faith of Christ, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith.* §
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* Heb. vii. 16. † Chap. ix. Verse 10. || Verses 4, 5, 6. § Verses 7, 8, 9.

He now comes to see that the Law had nothing to do with the Justification of Sinners. That Pardon, and Reconciliation, and the Gift of eternal Life were Acts of free Mercy in God, offered to all that would accept them by the Gospel. Therefore renouncing all other Claims as insufficient and vain, he desires to *be found in Christ, not having* (that is not trusting to) *his own Righteousness which is of the Law, but to the Righteousness which is of God by Faith in Christ*; the Assurance of which (in the next Verse) he grounds upon the *Knowledge of Christ, and the Power of his Resurrection.*

The Construction in the Original is somewhat perplexed; but I conceive that the Sense of the whole may be thus expressed.

“ And be found in him, not having MINE
 “ OWN Righteousness, which is of the
 “ Law; but that which is through the
 “ Faith of Christ: That Righteousness (I
 “ say) which is OF GOD through Faith;
 “ and which is ascertained to us by the
 “ Knowledge of Christ, and the Power of
 “ his Resurrection;” upon the Evidence
 of which he hoped himself to obtain a
 blessed Resurrection, by *having Fellowship*
 with Christ, and making himself *conformable*

to him in his *Death and Sufferings*. For so it immediately follows; *If by any Means I might attain unto the Resurrection of the Dead*; in which Words St. Paul did not mean to express any Distrust of what the Gospel promised, but the Firmness of his Resolution to endure every thing for the Promise sake.

The Point which naturally offers itself here to be considered is, the Virtue of Christ's Resurrection to support the Hopes of the Gospel. In which Argument we must take care not to separate what the Apostle hath joined together. Namely, the Knowledge of Christ, and, the Knowledge of his Resurrection. The Resurrection of Christ taken in the abstract will appear to be a great and a miraculous Work: But if you strip it of the Relation it bears to the Knowledge of Christ, that is, to the Knowledge of the Character he sustained, and what he undertook for us and hath promised to us, the Force and Virtue of it as an Argument to support our Hopes will be lost. What Christ undertook for us was to redeem us from Sin. This was effected by his Death. What he promised to us was, to raise us from the Grave to eternal

nal Life. This is the Christian's Hope; and of this Hope the Apostle thought it ample Security that Christ was raised from the dead. But how stands the Connexion between these two Things? Or how does it follow that because Christ was raised from the dead, therefore we also shall be raised? It may very truly and justly be said, that the end of Christ's Mission was to declare the Resurrection; and that the Resurrection of Christ being a Proof of his Mission, it must by Consequence, be a Proof of the Resurrection. It may be said farther that Christ having in his Life-Time undertaken for his own Resurrection, the Truth of his Mission did so hang upon this single Miracle, that if it had not been verified in the Event it would have destroyed all the rest. All this is very true; but I do not think, that this is the whole. For besides the Virtue of Christ's Resurrection (which it has in common with all other Miracles) to prove his general Mission; it seems to have a special Force to support that Part of his Character in which he declared himself to be THE JUDGE (as he was the Saviour) of the World; which rests upon his Resurrection as upon its proper Foundation, and

and must, by necessary Consequence, draw after it the Resurrection of the World. St. Paul himself places it in this Light, Acts xvii. 31. *God hath appointed a Day in the which he will judge the World--by that Man whom he hath ordained whereof he hath given Assurance unto all Men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* This Office Christ in his Life-Time, had challenged to himself. *The Father judgeth no Man, but hath committed all Judgment to the Son,* John v. 22. But how would this Doctrine have been received if it had been understood that the Son himself was to suffer the common Lot of Men? The Inconsistency was obvious; and therefore our Saviour at the same Time he claims the Authority of Judgment, declares himself to be the Author of Life, and foreshews both his own Resurrection and the Resurrection of the World. *I lay down my Life that I may take it again. No Man taketh it from me but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down; and I have power to take it again.* John x. 17, 18. And Chap. v. Verse 21. *As the Father raiseth up the Dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.* Again, Verse 26. *As the*

Father hath Life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have Life in himself, and hath given him Authority to execute Judgment also because he is the Son of Man. Marvel not at this; for the Hour is coming in the which all that are in the Graves shall hear his Voice and shall come forth, &c.

As the Time drew nearer, Predictions of this Kind grew more clear and exprefs; and Jesus frequently told his Disciples *how that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many Things of the Elders and chief Priests and Scribes, and be killed and be raised again the third Day.** All this was suitable to the different Parts of his Character. As the Redeemer of the World, it was necessary that he should die; as the Judge of the World it was necessary that he should be raised. And this is what St. Peter means Act. ii. 24. where speaking of Christ he says, that *God had raised him up having loosed the Pains of Death because it was not POSSIBLE that he should be holden of it.* It was not *possible*, i. e. it was not fit, it was not consistent that he who had declared himself the Author of Life, and was ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and dead, † should himself see Corruption

* Matt. xvi. 21. and alibi passim. † Act. x. 24.

ruption. If Christ had seen Corruption, he might (it is true) have raised himself to Life again at the Distance of Ages. But, in the mean time, where had been the Hopes of the World? What Foundation of Assurance could there have been to the Apostles to go out to preach the Gospel? Could they have preached a Judge of the World that was dead and gone (for ought they knew) never to be seen or heard of more. But his Resurrection gave them all the Satisfaction they wanted; and was an Evidence not to be withstood, that Christ who had fulfilled the first Part of his Promise would fulfil the rest.

But farther yet; the Resurrection of Christ was his actual Investiture in that Kingdom which was appointed to Christ as Mediator, and which was to end with the Resurrection of the World, so St. Paul Rom. i. 4. Christ was DECLARED *to be the Son of God* WITH POWER --- BY *the RESURRECTION from the dead.* Of what POWER does he speak? Of the same, no Doubt, of which he speaks in another Place, where he says that *Christ was raised from the dead and set at God's right Hand in heavenly Places, far above all Principality,*

*and Power, and Might, and Dominion, and every Name that is named, not only in this World, but also in that which is to come. That, all Things were put under his Feet, and that he was made the Head over all Things.** These Passages shew that as the Office of Christ as our Redeemer was finished by his Death; so his Office as our King and Judge commenced at his Resurrection, by which he was invested in his regal Power. And this is what Christ says of himself, *I appoint unto you a Kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto me.†* There was, you see, a Kingdom appointed unto Christ. When? Why after his Death. For Christ was FIRST to suffer, THEN to enter into his Glory. || And it was after his Resurrection that he said, ALL POWER is given unto me both in Heaven and in Earth. § Now if you would know what that Power is, of which Christ was possessed in Consequence of his being invested with his regal Authority, you will find it in St. John's Gospel, Chap. xvii. Verse 1, 2. where our Saviour (in view of his Death than near at Hand) prays to his Father and says.

Father

* Eph. i. 20. † Luke xxii. 29. || Chap. xxiv. 26.
§ Matt. xxviii. 18.

Father the Hour is come; glorify thy Son that thy Son also may glorify thee; as thou hast given him power over all Flesh, that HE SHOULD GIVE ETERNAL LIFE to as many as thou hath given him. And what less can the Notion of a Kindom imply than (in our Saviour's Phrase) *Authority to execute Judgment, * in rewarding the Good and punishing the Bad?* Therefore St. Paul says, *he must reign till he hath put all Enemies under his Feet. That the last Enemy that shall be destroyed is Death.* The Destruction of Death is the Resurrection from the dead; for when the dead rise *Death* will be *swallowed up in Victory*; and then shall Christ deliver up the Kingdom to God even the Father, 1 Cor. 15.

From all this it appears that the mediatorial Kingdom of Christ (that which is called *his Kingdom* in Contradistinction to the Kingdom of the Father) began with *his Resurrection*, and will end with the general Resurrection. His State of Humiliation, was not his Kingdom but preparative to his Kingdom; and after he had died to save us, he was raised from the dead to rule and judge us. Now from hence the Con-

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nexion

nexion between Christ's Resurrection and our Resurrection will be most manifest. For if Christ was *therefore* raised that he might be our Judge, his Resurrection is then a direct Evidence that we shall stand in Judgment, and therefore that we shall be raised; for if the World is not raised the World cannot be judged. This is the true Hinge upon which St. Paul's Argument turns. *If there be no Resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen --- Again; if Christ be not risen then --- your Faith is vain --- then they which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished i. e. then there will be no Resurrection.* The Conclusion, I say, rests upon this: That the *End* of the Resurrection of Christ (in the Oeconomy of God) being relative to the Resurrection of the World; to deny either one or the other is, in effect, or by necessary Inference, to deny both. *But now (says he) is Christ risen from the dead and become the first Fruits of them that slept.* His Resurrection is as it were a Pledge in Hand to secure the Certainty of *ours*. For being the Investiture to his regal Power, it must of course draw after it every constituent Part of regal Authority, and consequently the Exercise of
Judg-

Judgment, upon the Subjects of this Kingdom; which being the dead as well as the living, it necessarily follows that the dead must be raised.

These were the Hopes upon which the Apostles set out; this the Doctrine they preached throughout the World, JESUS AND THE RESURRECTION, that is, Jesus as the Judge of the World, and the Resurrection of the World in order to stand before him in Judgment. The Apostles as Jews believed a Resurrection and a future State; but that the World should be judged by Jesus, was a Thing that had never entered into their Minds, till they were taught it by Him, and which it was impossible that they should have believed otherwise, than upon the fullest Conviction both of his Doctrine and his Resurrection. But thus fortified, thus convinced, that he who had promised was likewise able to fulfil; that he who had challenged to be their Judge, was in actual Possession of regal Power, and had all Things in Heaven and in Earth put under his Feet: THEY, who a little before, had been dreaming only of earthly Distinctions, and Privileges; immediately commence Citizens of another

World, and ~~there~~ place their final Hopes in defiance of every Thing that was either valuable or terrible in this. *St. Paul, in the Text, professes not only his Resolution, but even a Desire to know the Fellowship of Christ's Sufferings and to be made conformable to his Death.* Nor were these vain Words: For hear what he says of himself and his Fellow-Apostles: *1 Cor. ~~ix. 24.~~ 14. I think that God hath set forth us, the Apostles last, as it were appointed unto death. For we are made a Spectacle to the World, and to Angels, and to Men. --- Even unto this present Hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain Dwelling-place --- reviled --- persecuted --- defamed --- we are made as the Filth of the World, and are the Off-scouring of all Things. But* in all these Things they were more than Conquerors. All of them were actuated by one and the self-same Spirit of Fortitude and Resolution, that neither Death nor Life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor Things present, nor Things to come; nor Height, nor Depth, nor any other Creature, should separate them from the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus.* You see, a little above

* Rom. vii. 34. to the End.

above what was the Ground-work of this Courage---CHRIST IS RISEN, and is *even at the right Hand of God*---Who shall separate from the Love of Christ? Shall Tribulation, or Distress, or Persecution, or Famine, or Nakedness, or Peril, or Sword---Nay, in all these Things we are more than Conquerors, through him that loved us.

It is worthy to be observed that during our Saviour's Life-time, the Apostles discovered a Spirit very different from this. Peter who, upon all Occasions appeared the most bold and forward among them, denied his Master when he was apprehended by the Jews; and upon the same Occasion it is recorded of *all the Disciples* that they *forsook him and fled*. Matt. xxvi. 56. But after Christ's Resurrection not one of them ever forsook him. All held out to the last, nor declined the greatest Perils; --- and is not the Reason obvious? The Resurrection, (of which they had been Eye-witnesses) cleared up all their Doubts, and gave them a Firmness of Mind that was not to be shaken: Though we must also take this along with us, viz. That as they were now engaged in the Work of God, and singled out to be his Instruments in conveying

veying his saving Knowledge throughout the World; there can be no Doubt but that they were supplied with mighty Aids from above, to enable them to bear the Weight of their Sufferings, which to support seemed to require a Degree of Strength more than human. St. Paul himself lays it upon this. For when he mentions the Hardships he underwent for the Gospel Sake, he takes not the Praise of it to himself. *He was what he was by the Grace of God* (as he tells us.) If he laboured more abundantly than others; it was not *He but the Grace of God that was with him.* 1 Cor. xv. 10. If he was more than Conqueror; it was *through him that loved him.* If he could do all Things; it was *through Christ that strengthened him.* Philip. iv. 13. This Assistance our Saviour had promised to his Apostles, Luke xxi. 12. &c. where having forewarned them of the Treatment they should meet with from the Enemies of his Gospel; as, that they should *lay their Hands upon them, and persecute them* --- that they should by them be *delivered up to the Synagogue and into Prisons, and brought before Kings and Rulers for his Names-Sake*; he bids them *settle it in their*
Hearts

Hearts not to meditate before what they should answer; for that HE would give them a Mouth and Wisdom, which all their Adversaries should not be able to gainsay or resist. And it appeared in the Event that HE who gave them a Mouth and Wisdom, gave them also Courage and Resolution; according to that of St. Paul, 2 Tim. i. 7. God hath not given us the Spirit of Fear, but of Power --- and of a sound Mind.

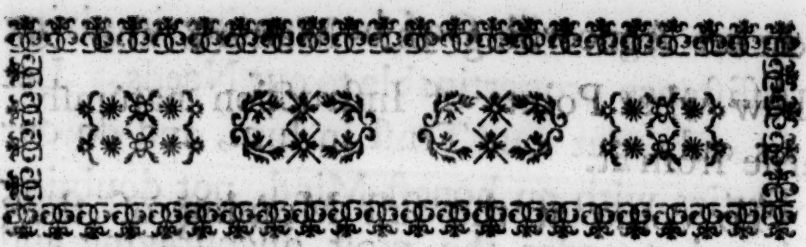
This Spirit, so conspicuous in the Apostles, rested upon those also who succeeded them in the Work of the Ministry; and upon great (and almost incredible) Numbers of those who through their Preaching embraced the Faith of Christ. Read that dreadful Account which we meet with Heb. xi. 35. &c. *They were tortured not accepting Deliverance that they might obtain a better Resurrection; --- others had Trials of cruel Mockings and Scourgings, yea, moreover, of Bonds and Imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the Sword: They wandered about in Sheep-skins and Goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented: --- They wandered in Deserts, and in Mountains, and in Dens, and in Caves of the Earth. This*
Passage

Passage looks back upon the Sufferings of the faithful People of God, in the Ages before the coming of Christ : But it is as true a Description of what the first Christians suffered under the heathen Persecutions. And must there not have been a mighty Power to support so much Constancy in such Numbers of all Conditions, of both Sexes, of all Ages, who freely laid down their Lives for the Testimony of Jesus and the Resurrection ! Shew me an Example like this in all History, or confess that the Hand of God was in this Work ; which whoever, to avoid the Evidence of a miraculous Power, shall deny, he must (as Grotius has well observed) be obliged to admit something that is MORE than miraculous.

Let this Observation serve for the confirming our Faith. The Use that we are to make of this whole Matter in Practice, is to learn to bear the common Calamities of Life with Patience and Fortitude. We have the same Hope to support us that the Apostles and first Christians had ; and if they had greater Aids from above, as having been called to more difficult Trials ;
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in no Age will God be wanting in giving Assistance proportionable to our Needs. Let us only put our Trust in him, and do our Duties with an honest Mind, not doubting but that under the most discouraging and pressing Circumstances that may befall us for the Sake of a good Conscience, he will speak Peace to our Souls and say as he said to his Apostle, *my Grace is sufficient for thee---My Strength is made perfect in Weakness.* 2 Cor. xii. 9.





S E R M O N XI.



HEBREWS i. 3.

-----*When he had by himself purged our Sins
[he] sat down on the right Hand of the
Majesty on high.*

OU have seen in a foregoing Discourse, * that the Gospel is God's Call to Repentance and Salvation, offered to all Mankind, by or through the Propitiation made by Jesus Christ. As this Propitiation is the corner Stone of Christianity, it will be necessary to give it a more particular Explanation; in which I do not mean to trouble you with nice and curious Disputes; but only to lay down plainly and distinctly what the Scripture teaches

* Serm. viii.

teaches concerning this Matter; and to shew what Points of Instruction naturally arise from it.

To come at the full Meaning of the Text, we must attend to what follows in this Epistle. At Chap. ii. Verse 9. the Apostle says, *We see Jesus who was made a little lower than the Angels, for (or by) the suffering of Death, crowned with Glory and Honour, that he by the Grace of God should taste Death for every Man.* What in the Text is stiled *purging our Sins by himself*, is here called *tasting Death for every Man*. And both Expressions denote, that we are saved by his Death. Therefore he is stiled *the Captain of our Salvation*, by whom we are *sanctified and brought unto Glory* (Vers. 10, 11.) and set forth as having *taken part with us of the same Flesh and Blood, that through Death, he might destroy him that hath the Power of Death, that is, the Devil, and deliver them who through the Fear of Death, were all their Life-time subject to Bondage* (Vers. 14, 15.) The Destruction of the Devil means the Destruction of his Dominion and Power; and the Devil hath Power over us by Sin, of which he is the Author, Ringleader,
and

and Promoter. And therefore the Devil is here said to have the *Power of Death*, because by Sin, (whereof he is the Instrument) we are made subject to Death; that State of *Fear* and *Bondage* from which, whilst Sin remaineth, there can be no Deliverance. But Christ hath wrought our Deliverance. He hath destroyed Sin; and Death which is the Wages of Sin. How? Why, *by himself*; by his *Death*; as it is expressly said. He hath purged our Sins therefore, in offering himself up as an *Attonement* or *Propitiation* for Sin, as it follows Verse 17. where he is said to be *a merciful and faithful High Priest in Things pertaining to God, to make Reconciliation for the Sins of the People.*

Let us go on to the fifth Chapter, and we shall see a Comparison stated between the Levitical Priesthood and the Priesthood of Christ. *For every High Priest taken from among Men, is ordained for Men, in Things pertaining to God, that he may offer both Gifts and Sacrifices for Sins. --- And no Man taketh this Honour to Himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest, but he that*
said

said unto him, *Thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten thee---*Who in the Days of his Flesh, when he had offered up Prayers and Supplications with strong Crying and Tears, unto him that was able to save him from Death---being made perfect he became the Author of eternal Salvation to all them that obey him. (Vers. 4---9.) Here Christ is set forth to be a High Priest as Aaron was; called of God as Aaron was; performing the Office of an High Priest as Aaron did, and as all other High Priests used to do; praying, interceding, and making Reconciliation. In Point of Excellency, there was indeed a great Difference between the Priesthood of Christ and that of the Jewish High-Priests, which the Apostle distinctly notes in the subsequent Parts of this Epistle. *They were many Priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of Death. But Christ because he continueth for ever, hath an unchangeable Priesthood* (Chap. vii. Vers. 23, 24.) *The Law made Men Priests which had Infirmary; but our High Priest is holy, barmless, undefiled, separate from Sinners.* (Vers. 26---28.) And as our High-Priest is more excellent, so his Ministration hath

a greater and more noble Effect, by how much he is the Mediator of a better Covenant established upon better Promises. (Chap. viii. Verse 6.) For the Law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better Hope did, by which we draw nigh unto God, (Chap. vii. Verse 19.) Under the Law, the High Priest went once a Year into the second Tabernacle, not without Blood (the Blood of Beasts) which he offered for himself, and for the Errors of the People---that could not make him that did the Service perfect, as pertaining to the Conscience---But Christ being come an High Priest of good Things to come, by a greater and more perfect Tabernacle, not---by the Blood of Goats and Calves but by his own Blood, entered once into the holy Place, having obtained eternal Redemption for us. For if the Blood of Bulls and Goats---sanctifieth to the purifying of the Flesh; how much more shall the Blood of Christ---purge your Consciences from dead Works, to serve the living God? Chap. ix. Vers. 7, &c. From all this it appears, that the Blood of Christ hath an Effect correspondent to that of the Sacrifices under the Law; that is to say, as the one was a Remedy against legal

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gal Impurities, and in the View and Construction of Law, made Men in these Respects guiltless; so the other washes away the Defilements of Conscience, and makes us clean in the Sight of God. The one took away Sin, as it respected the temporal Law of Moses; the other takes away the Imputation of Sin, as it relates to the eternal Law of God, by which we are to stand or fall, at the great and final Day of Judgment.

This is the general Doctrine of Scripture concerning Christ's Mediation. Now let us consider a little more distinctly, the several Parts comprized under it. And in the first Place; this Doctrine supposes, that as we are all in a State of Sin, so, without Christ, we are all in a State of Condemnation. For if we were not in a State of Condemnation, there would have been no Room for Redemption. But St. Paul says, that we are *by Nature, the Children of Wrath*. Eph. ii. 3. *By Nature*, that is, antecedently to the Grace of God in Christ, as the following Verses shew. *But God who is rich in Mercy---even when we were dead in Sins--- hath raised us up together, and made us to sit together in hea-*

venly Places, in (or by), Christ Jesus. By raising us up together, and making us to sit down together in heavenly Places, the Apostle means the restoring us to the Privilege of eternal Life, the Assurance of which is such, that he speaks of it as a Thing actually in Possession. But upon what doth this Privilege hang? Why he tells us, upon the Mercy of God in or by Christ Jesus, or through the Attonement made by his Blood; from whence it follows, that till we have made ourselves the proper Subjects of that Mercy, we are the Children of Wrath, or liable to Condemnation. And this is called our natural State, as it is the State under which we are born, and from which we cannot be delivered, till we are accepted to the Privileges of the Gospel.

That which qualifies us for this Benefit at first, is the giving up our Names to Christ, or the becoming Christ's Disciples; of which our Baptism is the publick Profession, to which whosoever comes with a penitent Heart, passes from his natural State into a State of Grace, that is, his past Sins are freely forgiven, and he stands entitled to eternal Life, upon performing the

Conditions

Conditions upon which Christ hath purchased it for us. So says St. Peter, Acts ii. 38. *Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the Name of Jesus Christ, for the Remission of Sins.* And St. Paul speaks of all who have been baptized unto Christ, as Members of his Body, and Heirs of his Promises by the Gospel. Gal. iii, 26. *Ye are all the Children of God by Faith in Christ Jesus; For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ---and if ye be Christ's, then are ye---Heirs according to the Promise.* But this Privilege which we obtain by our Admittance into this new State, shall avail us to Salvation no otherwise than as our Faith is productive of the Fruits of a good Life; for God hath not called us to Uncleaness, but unto Holiness, as St. Paul tells the Thessalonians, 1 Epistle Chap. iv. Verse 7. And to the same Purpose, Ephes. ii. 10. *We are his Workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good Works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them; whereof the Apostle puts the Ephesians in Mind at the very same Time that he tells them, that they were no more Strangers and Foreigners, but Fellow Citizens with the Saints*

and of the Household of God: A very plain Evidence, that as Repentance is necessary to our Admission into the Covenant of God's Mercy in Christ; so a constant Continuance in Well-doing (not excluding at any Time the Benefit of Repentance in Case of Transgression) is equally necessary towards preserving that Interest in God, to which the Covenant entitles us, and to make us actual Partakers of the Kingdom of Heaven.

From hence then we perceive what Relation the good Works of a Christian bear to the Salvation of a Christian. They are necessary as the Condition of the Covenant; but they avail only in Virtue of the Covenant. And this is true, not only of those Works which are done before we come to Christ; but of those also which are done after we are made Members of his Church by Baptism, in Pursuance of the Engagements that the Covenant lays us under. Justification is not more pleadable by Works under the Gospel, than by Works without the Gospel. For he that pleads Justification by Works, must shew that his Works are perfect, because, if he is a Sinner, the Law condemns him.

Now

Now Sinners we are all of us, as well after Faith as before Faith : As well against the revealed Law of God, as against the natural Law. And therefore we must at all Times, seek Justification from Christ, through whose Mediation that imperfect Obedience shall serve, which without it, would not have been accepted.

This is a short Account of the Doctrine of Justification ; which is supported by the constant Authority of Scripture, and acknowledged by the unanimous Consent of all Christian Churches. Those who set out upon other Principles, and considering Christ merely as a Preacher of Righteousness, found their Hopes of Salvation upon Repentance, abstracted from the Attonement and Reconciliation made by him, do Injury to the Gospel, and give great Handle to Unbelievers. Yet this is no uncommon Case. For ask many why Christ came in the Flesh ? and they will answer, that it was to administer a Remedy to the Corruptions of natural Light ; to explain and enforce the moral Law. Ask them farther, how Sinners are reconciled unto God ? They will tell you by Repentance, which they consider, as hav-

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ing in itself the Virtue to put away Sin. For if at any Time, they undertake to explain *how* Repentance reconciles us to God; they flee not to the Gospel for Help, but set up their own Reason in its Stead, and argue from the Justice and Goodness of God as evident to natural Light, as if he was *obliged* to be reconciled to repenting Sinners. This Account of Christianity (I say) gives great Handle to Unbelievers; of whom few are so unreasonable as not to allow that the Gospel is a good moral System. But considering it in no higher Light, they think that there could be no Use (or that there was no Necessity at least) for Revelation to teach that which every Man knows, or (as they will say) may know by the Use of his own Understanding. It is very true, that this Conclusion is by no Means just. Much has been said, and may reasonably be said, to shew that it was not unbecoming the Wisdom and Goodness of God to grant a Revelation, even admitting that the Gospel contains nothing more than what Right Reason, set free from Prejudice and Corruption, would have discovered. For what avails
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it to say, how much Reason uncorrupted can do, if Reason is in fact corrupted, and not sufficient of itself to cure its own Corruptions? But our sure Foundation is this, that the Gospel offers that Remedy for Sin which Nature cannot find: And after this, if any one will say that the Gospel offers nothing, they must shew that this is nothing, that is, they must prove the Method of Reconciliation offered by the Gospel to be absurd; which I will venture to say, the greatest Masters of Reason upon Earth will find to be impossible.

This Consideration should be of Weight with those who teach Christianity; to make them cautious, not to give up so material a Point as this to Unbelievers, which in Truth is nothing less than giving up the Gospel. The Gospel in the very Notion of the Word, is *good News* or *glad Tidings*, according to that Passage in St. Luke, *behold I bring you good Tidings of great Joy, which shall be to all People.* Luke ii. 10. So it is said of Christ, that *he went through every City and Village, preaching and shewing the glad Tidings of the Kingdom of God.*

Chap.

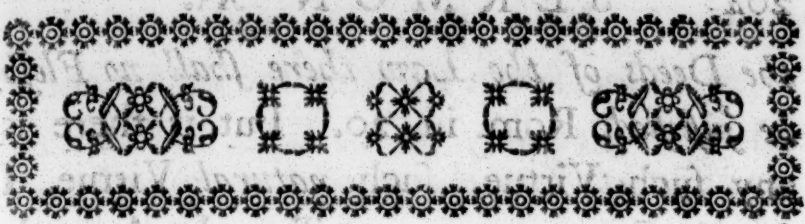
Chap. viii. Verse 1. But setting aside Christ's Mediation, I cannot see any *glad Tidings*, which he or his Apostles had to declare. For what were they? That Men should repent? This surely could afford little Comfort to those who were dead in Trespases and Sins! Was it then that God would be reconciled to Sinners, upon their Repentance? This is all that is left to be said. But what News was this, if they had this Means of Reconciliation already in their own Hands, and natural Light could shew it them? But take the Account of this Matter as the Scriptures give it, and all will be clear. *God hath given to us the Ministry of Reconciliation to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the World to himself, not imputing their Trespases unto them---He hath made him to be Sin for us who knew no Sin, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him. 2 Cor. v. 19---21.* These were the *glad Tidings*, as the same Apostle elsewhere explains it. *We declare unto you glad Tidings, how that the Promise which was made to the Fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their Children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again*
-----Be

---Be it known unto you therefore, Men and Brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the Forgiveness of Sins, and by him all that believe are justified.

Acts xiii. 32---40. Here was Comfort indeed! that when all were lost by Sin, Christ came to offer that Remedy by the shedding of his Blood, without which there could be no Remission; and this justifies, and alone can justify those many Representations in Scripture, where the Gospel is set forth to us as a *great* and a *hidden Mystery*. What then must Unbelievers think, when they read these Things in our Bibles, and see us laying new Foundations? Setting up natural Light, to the shutting out of all Mystery, and putting our own Works in the Place of the Blood of Christ? What is this but telling them in effect, that the Gospel, as Christ preached it, and his Apostles left it, is not to be defended? I say it plainly; that to lay aside Christ's Attonement, and to found a Claim to the Remission of Sin, upon the mere natural Virtue of Repentance, is to preach another Gospel. St. Paul says, *that by*
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the Deeds of the Law there shall no Flesh be justified. Rom. iii. 20. But if there is any such Virtue, such *natural* Virtue, I say, in Repentance, as will make Amends for the Breaches of the Law, and make us as clean in the Sight of God, as if we had not sinned; it must be said that we *are* justified by the Deeds of the Law; for Repentance is the Work of the Law, and if Repentance justifies, the Law justifies, and *Christ is dead in vain.*





S E R M O N XII.



LUKE xxiv. 49.

----- *But tarry ye in the City of Jerusalem
until ye be endued with Power from on
high.*

 H E S E Words are a Part of the Discourse which our Saviour had with his Apostles after his Resurrection, and immediately before his Ascension into Heaven. The meaning of them will best be understood, by laying together some other Passages of Scripture relating to the same Subject.

It is recorded Acts i. 4. that Christ *being assembled together with his Apostles, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the Promise of the Father.*

Father. Here they are commanded to tarry at Jerusalem till they should be endued with Power from on high. The Promise of the Father therefore, must have been the Promise of *this Power* with which they were now to be endued. What this Power was we learn from the next Verse. For John truly baptized with Water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. And Verse 8. Ye shall receive Power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon upon you or (as the Words would be better rendered) the Holy Ghost coming upon you; that is, by the Holy Ghost's coming upon you. The Power they were to receive was the Power of the Holy Ghost; which was given for this purpose, that they might be *Witnesses unto Christ*, and that not only in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria, but also unto the uttermost Part of the Earth. Our Saviour had preached the Gospel among his Countrymen the Jews; and so had his Apostles. But now they are commanded (as it is expressed Mark xvi. 15.) to go into all the World and preach the Gospel to every Creature. To qualify them for which extensive Work, I say, it was that they were commanded to tarry at Jerusalem till they had

had received the *Promise* of the Father; *Power* from on high. In what sort this Promise was made good to them we learn from Acts ii. 1---4. *And when the Day of Pentecost was fully come they were all with one accord in one Place --- and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other (that is, with strange) Tongues as the Spirit gave them Utterance.*

The Points I propose to consider are; the Propriety and Necessity of that Power of the Holy Ghost, which was now granted to the Apostles to qualify them to preach the Gospel throughout the World; and the Evidence that arises from hence of the Truth of the Christian Religion. In order to which, it will be necessary that the *Effects* of the Power of the Holy Ghost residing in the Apostles, be distinctly attended to.

One, and the first visible, Effect, then was this; that the Apostles who were Galileans, and spoke only the Language of their own Country, were in an Instant of Time, without human Help or Instruction, enabled to speak the Languages of all the World. For thus it is recorded Act. i. 5. *There were dwelling at Jerusalem devout*
Men

Men (or Profelytes) out of every Nation under Heaven; and they were confounded, because that every Man heard them speak in his own Language. Whilst the Apostles preached to their own Countrymen, they had no occasion for any Language but their own. But when they were to preach to all the World, it was necessary that they should understand the Languages of all the World. Thus far the Matter is clear. But this was but one of those many Effects, a Catalogue whereof is given by St. Paul, 1 Cor. xii. 8. To one is given---the Word of Wisdom; to another --- Knowledge --- to another Faith---to another the Gifts of Healing---to another the working of Miracles; to another Prophecy; to another discerning of Spirits; to another divers Kinds of Tongues; to another the Interpretation of Tongues. All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit dividing to every Man severally as he will. I shall not enter into these Particulars farther than they fall under two general Heads, distinctly specified by our Saviour, to which the most principal of them may be reduced.

The first, is the inward Gift of *Illumination*, or *Inspiration*, by which the Apostles
were

were certainly and infallibly instructed, in those Doctrines or Truths which concerned the Salvation of Men. Of this our Saviour speaks John xvi. 13. *When the Spirit of Truth is come he will guide you into all Truth.* And Chap. xiv. Verse 26. *But the Comforter which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, he shall teach you all Things, and bring all Things to your Remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.* The Necessity of this Gift is manifest; for if they themselves were not infallibly instructed in these Things, they could not be infallible Guides to others. But this was what they took upon themselves to be; for what they taught, they taught not as from themselves, but as from God the Fountain of Truth, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. From our Saviour whilst on Earth they had learned many Things, as he himself had received them of the Father. But they were Men, and had the Frailties and Infirmities of Men; and (as it is intimated in the Passage above cited) wanted a carefull Monitor, to *bring* some Things back to their *Remembrance*, to which they had not sufficiently attended. And not only so, but

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(as he gave them express Caution) he had *many Things to say to them which they could not then bear* (John xvi. 12.) and the opening of which he purposely reserved till being fortified with Strength from above they should be in a fit Condition to receive them.

To give an Instance or two. The Apostles had been bred up Jews; and were full of the common Prejudices of their Country concerning the Kingdom of the Messiah, and the Nature of that Salvation which was to be wrought by him. That the Salvation was to be *temporal* they all believed; as appears from many Passages in the new Testament which it is needless to recite. And though our Saviour in his life Time had gone so far towards undeceiving them in this, as to let them know that *the Son of Man* was to be *crucified and slain*, they would hardly believe him. And when Experience had convinced them of this, and they saw their Master slain before their Eyes, presently they were offended and gave up all for lost; till discovering himself to be again alive, he communed with them, and *opened their Understandings*

standings that they might understand the Scriptures and see that thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the Dead the third Day. Verse 45.

And as they believed that the Salvation was to be temporal; so they believed it was to be confined to their own Country and Nation; in which Mistake they seem not to have been undeceived, till the Time being come when the *Door of Faith* was to be opened to the Gentiles, St. Peter was instructed by a special Vision from Heaven, that all Distinction between Jew and Gentile was now at a full End, see Act. Chap. x. and xi.

What I mean by these Instances is to shew that it did not seem meet to the Wisdom of God, to communicate to the Apostles all at once every thing that pertained to the Knowledge of the Gospel of his Son; which proves the Need they had of being put under the Guidance of his Holy Spirit, to be instructed from Time to Time in so much as was necessary and fit according to the Measure in which the growing Reformation was to proceed. And though we cannot shew exactly in what Points of Knowledge they were defective in this or

that particular Period of their Ministry ; it is yet reasonable and necessary to suppose that in the whole Compass of it taken together, they were wanting in nothing, but that the Holy Ghost did fully communicate to them the whole Mystery of our Faith, so far as it was thought proper to be revealed to Mankind. For he was to *abide with them for ever*. No other Guide was to succeed Him. And since the very End of their Mission was to *declare the whole Counsel of God*, as relative to the Salvation of Mankind by Christ ; there can be no Doubt but that the Holy Ghost did fully perfect in them what our Saviour in the Time of his Ministry had left unfinished.

You see then in what Sense and upon what Grounds we maintain the Infallibility of the Apostles. It is not necessary to say that they were absolutely, and in all Respects, infallible, nor in fact were they so. In Matters of general Knowledge ; in Matters of common Prudence ; they were left to themselves as other Men are : And therefore we find Peter and Paul differing in their Judgments about the *Expediency of eating or not eating with the Gentiles*, Gal. ii. 11. But in nothing which was the pro-

per Subject of their Mission; in no *Dogma* or Christian Doctrine; in nothing which they declared as *from the Lord*; in nothing of this Kind could they disagree; in nothing could they be deceived. In all these Points they had the infallible Direction of the Holy Ghost; and to suppose they had *not*, would by no Means consist with what the Scripture affirms, that the Holy Ghost was to *guide them into all Truth*. And with this Account the Fact agrees. For whatever Difference or Variety there may be as to some circumstantial Matters of little Importance; we find a perfect Harmony, and Consistency between them, in all doctrinal Points. They all deliver the same Rule of Life; all the same System of Faith; in one God the Father; in one Christ the Redeemer, the Son of God, the Maker and Judge of all the World, the Mediator between God and Man, through whose Blood offered as the Attonement and Propitiation for Sin, all Transgressions shall be forgiven, and we shall be accepted by true Repentance, to the Inheritance of eternal Life.

What was an infallible Ground of Faith to the Apostles will be so to us, provided

we have sufficient Evidence, that what they received, that also they faithfully delivered. To which Purpose serves the second Gift which I am now to take notice of, the Gift of Miracles. Of this, distinct Mention is also made by our Saviour, as you find in Mark xvi. 17. *And these Signs shall follow them that believe; in my Name they shall cast out Devils, they shall speak with new Tongues, they shall take up Serpents, and if they drink any deadly Thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay Hands on the Sick and they shall recover.* To what End all this? It follows Verse xx. for *Confirmation of the Word*, and to shew that the Lord was working with them.

To explain the Nature of this Kind of Evidence it must be supposed; that as reasonable Creatures Mankind understood, that God made and governs the World. There is no such thing as framing any Notion of God, without considering him as influencing, ordering, and directing the Things of this World; and therefore when it was known by long Experience and Observation, what the common Operations of Nature were, and they saw the established Course and Order of Things changed, and
Effects

Effects to proceed from Causes upon which, by any known Law, they had no Dependency; it was natural for them to conclude that such Change was the Work of that invisible Power in whose Hands they placed the Direction of human Things. Nicodemus spoke but the common Sense of a Man when he said *Rabbi we know that thou art a Teacher come from God, for no Man can do these Miracles, that thou dost, except God be with him.* John iii. 2. What were the Works that Christ did, which are here called Miracles? Why at his Word *the Blind received their Sight, the Lame walked, the Lepers were cleansed, the Deaf heard, and even the Dead were raised.* Matt. xi. 5. Christ is said to have done the Works, because he was the only visible Agent in them. But the Works were the Works of God, by his Power attending Christ, and so esteemed because such Effects from such a Cause was against all the Knowledge and Experience in the World. Admitting now the Works to have been the Works of God; it is rationally concluded that Christ was *a Teacher sent from God*, because it is reasonable to be presumed that God would not thus have attended Christ with

his Power, unless he had approved of the Purpose for which he came down, y^elo
 Nicodemus was a Jew, and as such instructed in the Knowledge of the one true God; and to this Belief his Language and his Notions correspond. Follow the Apostles in their preaching among the Heathens; and you will find them resolving the Case according to their heathen Notions, but to the same Effect. We have an Instance Act. xiv. Verse 11. Paul and Barnabas were at Lystra, where *there sat a certain Man impotent in his Feet, being a Cripple from his Mothers-Womb, who never had walked.* This Man heard Paul speak; who stedfastly beholding him --- said with a loud Voice, *stand upright on thy Feet. And he leaped and walked.* The Apostle did no more than look upon the Man, and bid him stand up and walk; and instantly he was cured of his Lameness. What say the People to this? Why *when they saw what Paul had done, they lift up their Voices saying --- the Gods are come down to us in the Likeness of Men.* The People were astonished, as well they might be; for the Work was a Work, not of human, but, of divine Power. So they confess it to have been,

been; in a Manner suitable to their Theology, which was that this visible World and the Things of it were under the Superintendency, and Direction of more invisible Beings than one, who sometimes appeared in human Shape and conversed with Men. But the Effect appeared the same in both Cases, under Circumstances varying according to the different Principles of each. Nicodemus who believed that there was but one God, and took Jesus to be a Prophet sent from him, went to him only to be instructed. The Lystrians, who believed that there were many Gods, and that Paul and Barnabas were themselves of the Number of those Gods, *brought Oxen and Garlands and would have done Sacrifice* to them. The Conviction that followed was the same in both Cases. Nicodemus received what Christ taught, as God's Word; and the Lystrians (so many of them as were serious) were converted by the preaching of Paul and Barnabas. For presently, at Verse 20. we read of *Disciples*; and at Verse 21, 22. it is said that when the Apostles had preached the Gospel in the City of *Derbe*, *they returned again to Lystra confirming the Souls of the Disciples.*

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We have then the Sense both of Jews and Gentiles, (that is, in Effect, of all Mankind, however differing in their particular Notions of God and Religion) concurring to accept Miracles as a proper Evidence of a divine Manifestation; of which the great Numbers of Profelytes made by the Apostles in all Parts, of the World is yet a further incontestable Proof. The Argument is plain and simple, and rests upon these two Propositions; 1. That God is concerned in every Effect which is *beside* the known established Course of Things. 2. That God will not employ, or suffer his Power to attend any Person in this extraordinary Way, who under Colour of such Power shall falsely usurp his Name and Authority; at least not without leaving sufficient Marks to discover the Imposture, to those who will consider Things with any Degree of Seriousness. This is the Argument; and an Argument it is that may very safely be trusted with plain common Sense. But false Notions of Philosophy may blind Men's Eyes, as they did from the first, and still do to this Day. In the Age of the Apostles, Greece was yet famous for Arts and Learning; and it was from the *Op-
position*

position of Science falsely so called, falling in with the corrupt Inclinations of Men, that the Gospel met with its greatest Obstruction. St. Paul came to Athens, in the Power of God, but *the Epicurean and Stoick Philosophers* looked upon him as a *Babler*. No Marvel. These Men had removed the Foundation upon which the Evidence of Miracles rested. Their Philosophy shut God intirely out of the World; the one leaving all Things to *Chance*, the other subjecting them to *Fate*, or *Necessity*. It is more wonderful that the Jews were not convinced, who had been bred up in a Religion that stood upon this Kind of Evidence. They believed Moses to have been a great Prophet, because of the Signs and Wonders which he wrought. Why then did they not believe Christ and his Apostles, who in this Respect were not inferior to Moses? The Scripture has told us how they solved the Difficulty to themselves. *This Fellow (say they) doth not cast out Devils but by Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils.* Matt. xii. 24. They did not dispute the general Point, whether Miracles were the proper Evidence of a Prophet's Mission; for they had received the Law of Moses upon
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this Evidence. They did not deny the Point in Fact, that Christ wrought Miracles; for this they saw before their Eyes. But though they were convinced that the Works were not the Works of Man, yet they denied that they were the Works of God, and ascribed them to an intermediate Agent.

It is by the same Kind of Artifice that Unbelievers in all Ages have endeavoured to get rid of the Evidence of Miracles; and as it is the only colourable Objection, I shall say something to it very briefly. That there are intermediate Agents between God and Man must be admitted; for the Scriptures make mention of Spirits both good and evil. How far their Power extends to alter the established Course of natural and visible Things we cannot tell; but of this we are certain that they are all under the Controul of the one Supream God, without whose Permission they can do nothing. A Miracle therefore wrought by and intermediate Agent must be a Miracle wrought by the *Permission* of God; and the Question will be how far is it reasonable to suppose that God may permit intermediate Beings to act in such Cases. Be the Power of Spirits as great as you can imagine, this
you

you must suppose, that God *hath not left himself without Witness*, but that he hath so far limited that Power, as that it shall always be possible for him to make himself known to his Creatures, whenever he shall think it proper so to do. Every Man but an Atheist must have a natural Sense that God may communicate himself to his Creatures, and must conceive that it may be as reasonable for him so to do in many Cases, as it is reasonable for one Creature to communicate itself to another. He hath first manifested himself to us by the visible Creation. *The Heavens declare his Glory, and the Firmament sheweth his handy Work.* If after this he should think fit to make himself known to us, it must be by some change in visible Things, declaring the same Power by which the visible Things themselves were established. Consider now the Works wrought by Christ and his Apostles, of what Sort they were. Take the whole Series and Combination of them together and try if you can imagine any Thing greater, or which more bespeaks the Hand of God. If you say that this is not Evidence, will you be pleased to say what is or what would be Evidence in your
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Opinion? We are not Judges of the Degrees of Power requisite to the producing many natural, much less supernatural, Effects. We can scarce tell which is the greatest Work, to cure a sick, or a lame, or a blind Man in certain Cases, or to raise a dead one to Life again. But take the Power attending Christ and his Apostles as it was seen in all the Miracles that they wrought, and in Appearance, or to our Apprehension (which is the only Rule we have to go by) it is in nothing inferior to that Power by which the Heavens and the Earth were made.

If this Matter were duly considered, it would cut off Abundance of needless Questions in those who love to raise Doubts to perplex the common Sense of Mankind. And when once it is admitted that the Works were the Works of God, it will be thought I hope a very natural Inference, that the Doctrine in Confirmation of which they were wrought is from God; for it depends upon this first and fundamental Principle of natural Religion that God is true and cannot lye.---But we may be called upon perhaps to shew, that we are not imposed upon in these Accounts, and a
Matter

Matter it is very necessary to be spoken to. You will easily foresee, that the Time before me will not permit me to enter largely into this Argument; I shall therefore confine myself at present to the single Miracle which was the first and most remarkable Effect of the Descent of the Holy Ghost at the Day of Pentecost, namely, the Gift of Tongues; and consider how improbable, or rather impossible it was, if no such Thing had happened, that it should ever have been recorded to us in the Scripture History.

There are two Circumstances then, in the Story worth Observation. One concerns the *Number* of the *Persons* who are reported all at once to have received this extraordinary Gift, who were, the twelve Apostles at least, but most probably the whole Assembly of Apostles and Christians to the Number of *a Hundred and Twenty*, as mentioned in the foregoing Chapter. The other respects the *Season when* this is said to have happened, which was at a solemn yearly Festival, when there was at Jerusalem a great Concourse of People from all Quarters of the World. To which we may add a third relating to the *Effect* of this

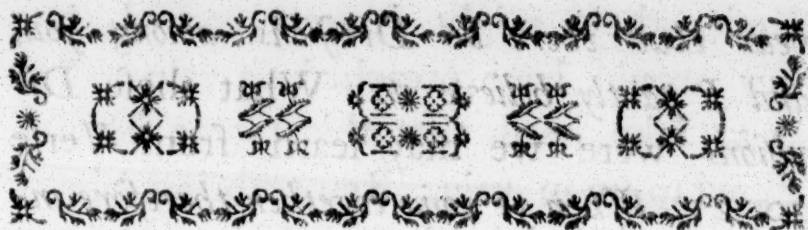
this Miracle viz. that *in the same Day three Thousand* Persons are said to have been converted to the Christian Faith. Now can any one imagine, that had it been the Design of the Writer of this History, to support an Imposture by counterfeit Miracles, he would have cloathed his Fables in such Circumstances of publick Notoriety? It may be observed of most of our Saviour's Miracles, that being reported to have been done in Publick, these Reports are so many Appeals to the publick Faith, for the Truth of them; and in this particular Relation the Appeal is so general, and the Date of the Fact so near the Time of writing the History, that it seems impossible that the Fraud (if it had been a Fraud) should not immediately have been exposed, and the Author and his Book have at once lost all Credit. Suppose that somebody at this Time a Day should take a Fancy to publish a History of Miracles in favour of the Protestant Persuasion; would he, think you, begin his Book with a Relation, that at Rome, about thirty Years ago at the Time of a publick Jubilee, there were a hundred Christians who declared
against

against the Popish Faith, and in one Day made three Thousand Converts in consequence of a great and surprizing Miracle wrought upon them, that being all Romans born, and Men of no Education, they were on a sudden enabled to speak all the modern Languages? Could such a Tale as this gain any Credit? Would not the Objection be obvious and unanswerable, that if such an extraordinary Thing had happened, it must have been known at Rome, and heard of before now in other Parts of Europe, and that all remembrance of it could not so soon have been lost? The Truth therefore is, that St. Luke in recording this Fact, recorded a Thing well known in those Times, and which, no Doubt, there were yet Numbers of living Witnesses to attest. But this is not all. The Credit of this Miracle is farther supported by an indisputable Matter of Fact, which both supposes and depends upon the Truth of it. The Apostles (as I have said before) were born Jews. They were Men of low Figure in Life; of no Literature; yet they were called upon to preach the Gospel to all the World. How should they be qualified for so great

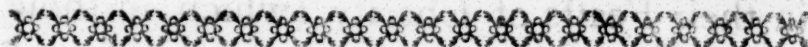
a Work? By human Means? It was impossible; for by human Means they were unprovided with Languages, and without being understood they could not preach the Gospel. But preach it they did; and all the Proofs we have from History of their quickly dispersing themselves into different Parts of the World, and planting the Gospel in every Nation where they came (which are Matters of *profane* as well as of *sacred* Record) are so many Proofs of the Truth of what the new Testament relates in this particular. To speak the Whole; the Success which the Apostles met with in this Work, in the great Numbers of Converts they made among People of all Nations and Languages, is a most evident Proof that they had not only the Gift of Tongues, but the Power of working other Miracles. The Gift of Tongues was a Miracle to those who knew their Birth and Education, and had Proofs of the Circumstances under which they received it; and as such it wrought Conviction in many. But to the rest of the World, if they had not been endued with miraculous Gifts of other
Kinds,

Kinds, they might have preached, but they would have preached in vain. But let us take heed that this Grace be not offered to us in vain: Remembring who it is that hath said *he that rejecteth me and receiveth not my Words hath one that judgeth him: The Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last Day.* John xii. 48.





S E R M O N XIII.



I COR. XI. 19.

*For there must be also Heresies among you,
that they which are approved, may be
made manifest among you.*

THE Apostle in the foregoing Part
of this Chapter, having treated
concerning certain Matters relating to the decent Behaviour of Christians in their publick Assemblies; proceeds (Verse 17.) to tax the Corinthians with some Abuses which he understood they had been guilty of in the Celebration of the Lord's Supper. *Now in this that I declare unto you, I praise you not; that you come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the Church, I*
hear

hear that there be Divisions among you, and I partly believe it. What these Divisions were we may learn from Verse 20, 21. When ye come together therefore into one Place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, every one taketh before other his own Supper, and one is hungry, and another is drunken. It seems that in their Feasts of Charity (which in those Days constantly attended the Celebration of the Sacrament) there was not a due Regularity observed. For whereas these were intended at first, for the Relief and Support of the Poor, who were wont to sit down together with the Rich, at one common Table; this Order was growing into Disuse, and every one taking to himself that Share which he brought, and which ought to have been set forth to all in common; some had too little, others too much; one was hungry, another was drunken. Hence the Divisions. Now the Apostle in my Text not only declares himself in a great Measure persuaded that the Reports which he had heard concerning these Things were true, but foretells something worse to follow; For there must be ALSO He-

refies among you. The proper Distinction between the *Heresies* and the *Divisions* seems to be this; that the *Divisions* were such Kinds of Differences as might subsist among those who held the common Faith. Of this Sort were the Divisions spoken of in this Place; and so were those mentioned Chap. i. when *every one said I am of Paul, I of Apollos, I of Cephas, and I of Christ.* But *Heresy* is a Word of stronger Signification, and denotes an open Revolt or Apostacy from the Faith, in those who still retain and challenge to themselves the Name of Christians. Such as these the Apostle tells the *Corinthians* there *must* be; by which is meant not that God had laid any Force upon human Liberty to compel Men to be Hereticks; but, that the human Liberty supposed, and the Tempers and Dispositions of Men in the Use of that Liberty considered, it was morally impossible that there should not be Heresies. And fitting it is, that the Wisdom of God should order and suffer it thus to be, for the Reason which is here subjoined, namely, *That they who are approved may be made manifest.* I shall consider the
Words

Words with a distinct View to these two Points, and enquire,

First; Upon what Accounts it is necessary that there should be Heresies in the Church of Christ.

Secondly; How the Wisdom of God is manifested in ordering it thus to be.

First, I am to shew, upon what Accounts it is necessary that there should be Heresies in the Church of Christ. Now as Heresy is a Departure from the Faith, it is clear in general, that it must ever be founded either in a Misunderstanding of the Rule of Faith, or in a willful Opposition to the Truth. The Rule of Faith at first, was the oral Instruction of Christ and his Apostles; and those who had the Opportunity of being taught by them *immediately*, were less in Danger of mistaking the Rule: Yet mistaken, even in those Times, it might, possibly, have been. But when the Doctrines of the Gospel were no longer to be learned from the Mouths of inspired Men, the Writings of inspired Men, that is the Scriptures, became the Rule of Faith; and these, it is plain, not only may be misunderstood, but most probably will be misunderstood, when they

fall into ignorant and unskilful Hands; according to that of St. Peter, who speaking of the Writings of St. Paul, saith, that *in them are some Things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own Destruction.* 2 Pet. iii. 16.

Here is then one very evident Source of Heresy, the *Misunderstanding* of the Scriptures. And the Reason why, morally speaking, it is impossible that the Scriptures should *not* be misunderstood by many is, because there are always those Causes working in human Nature, which are disposed to unqualify Men for the Reception of the Truth. For Instance; *Conceit* and *Pride*, by which Men mistaking their own Abilities, aim at Things beyond their Reach. Hence it is that those who are ignorant disdain the proper Means of Information: And (what is yet worse) that those who (their Station and Capacities considered) ought to be Learners, set themselves up to be Instructors of others. All Ages will furnish numerous Examples of this Kind; And to that Degree of Distraction and Mad-

ness have some been driven by this Dis-temper of Mind, that they have mistaken their own Reveries for the Inspirations of the Holy Ghost. There is nothing so wild and extravagant, which a confident Enthusiast may not give forth as the Oracle of God. For it is not likely that a Man should pay much Regard to the Scriptures, who is persuaded that he has an infallible Guide in his own Breast. And the Mischief in this Case (and all other Cases of the like Sort) is, that no Man scarce ever ventured to broach a foolish and absurd Thing, who has not found some to back and support him. There is nothing in this, but what must be expected. For like Causes will have like Effects; and the same wrong Turn of Thought which helps one Man to invent, will as naturally lead others of the same Cast to approve and admire.

We are not to imagine that Pride is a Weed that flourishes only in rude and uncultivated Minds. The wise (as they are commonly esteemed) and the learned are not less obnoxious to this Vice than other Men; and whenever it lays rank Hold in such as these, the Mischief is the worse,

as

as the Improvements of Art fall in, in Aid of the Corruptions of Nature. It is the Property of a proud Man, to endure no Opposition, to brook no Foil; and yet it is plain, that he that would *learn of Christ* must be *meek and humble*, and in many Points submit his Judgment implicitly to the Authority of God. I do not mean that in order to be a sound Christian, a Man must give up his Understanding. This is the Reproach of those who mean ill to Christianity. But it is a clear Case, that he must give up his Pride and Self-Will, and be contented to believe many Things, the Manner of which he cannot understand. Therefore if a Man will lay it down as a Rule to himself, to believe nothing which Reason cannot fathom; the Consequence will be, that he must give up the Gospel, or torture and wire-draw the Scriptures to speak a Sense which the Holy Ghost never intended.

Near a-kin to Pride, is *Affectation of Singularity*, which arises from a certain Vanity of being admired, or rather gazed and wondered at. Men of this Temper never care to go in the common Road, if they can help it; and the Reason is plain:

For

For he that passes in a Croud, unless he greatly exceeds the common Size, is not likely to be taken Notice of. Such as these therefore affect uncommon Notions as Marks of Distinction; and are not often solicitous what others say or judge of them, provided they be but talked of. This is a great Instance of Weakness no doubt; and yet it is a very common one. But it is not more common than it is mischievous, wherever it predominates. For in Reason it must be expected, that the more clear and plain any Doctrine is, the more generally it will be received. And yet, if a Man be prejudiced against any Doctrine because it is generally believed, he will be the less apt to believe it.

Of the Power of *Prejudice* I need say but little; whether it be founded in Pride or in Vanity, or in any other Cause, the Effect of it is constantly the same, viz. Carelessness, or partial Examination, which never fail to misguide the Understanding, where there is a Possibility of being misled. As to that other Cause of Heresies before mentioned, namely a *willful Opposition* of the Truth; it is not to be conceived that any serious Christian should
deny

deny with his Mouth any Doctrine which his own Judgment and Conscience convinces him to be clearly taught in the Scriptures. But if a Man be not serious in the Profession of Christianity, he may do it and naturally will do it, when there are any Purposes to be served by it, that will make it worth the while. A Man may see that a Doctrine is taught in the Scripture, who does not own the Authority of the Scripture; and if such a one professing the Gospel, shall teach any Thing that he knows to be contrary to the Scripture, or abet and encourage those that do; whilst he is really no Christian, he will be a real Heretick. So it is with those who being abandoned to a vicious and a sensual Life, never give themselves the Trouble to consider what is true in Religion or what is false. It is not very natural for such to be the Beginners of Heresies; but they are very often the Promoters of Heresies, when such Heresies fall in with their vicious Tempers and Inclinations or suit with the Maxims of their worldly Policy, whether in Government, or in private Life. These are willful Opposers of the Truth, because they
willfully

willfully indulge those wicked Courses, which make Truth or Falshood, in their Reckoning and Esteem, to become indifferent Things.

Upon the whole then it appears, that to ask why there must be Heresies; is in effect to ask why are Men proud, or vain, or wicked? Men ought not to be so, no Question: But in Fact and Experience many have been so; and, morally speaking, it is certain that many always will be so. Therefore Heresies there always will and must be. And this, by the Way, shews how weak it is to urge the Differences among Christians in Matters of Faith, as an Objection against the Truth of the Gospel; for what hath the Truth of the Gospel to do with the Corruptions of Men? Is a Science not true, because its Principles have been mistaken? Is Geometry or Arithmetick not true, because Men may reckon wrong, and make false Calculations? It shews that Men are under very strong Inclinations to give up the Gospel, when they can satisfy themselves with such poor Shifts as these!

Nor is the Objection stronger against Providence, than it is against the Truth
of

of the Gospel. For Pride and Vanity, and Wickedness, are all of them Abuses of Liberty; and therefore to ask why God permits Men to be proud or vain, or wicked; is in effect to ask, why he hath made them free? If this be an Objection against Providence, it is an Objection which natural Religion is concerned to answer as well as revealed. But I do not think, that this is a Point which either of them are concerned to resolve. It is enough for us to know that we could not have *been* without the Act of a Being infinite in Wisdom, Power, and Goodness. That this infinitely wise and powerful Being *hath* made us free; and that if God had a Right to make us free (as certainly infinite Wisdom, Power and Goodness, can do nothing against Right) he is not accountable to us, but we to Him for the Abuse of our Liberty. These Principles admitted (which all Religion supposes) we may proceed to what I propounded in the next Place, which is to shew,

Secondly. How the Wisdom of God is manifested in suffering Heresies to arise.

Now the Case in general is this, That the breaking out of Heresies in the Church
opens

opens a large Field for the Exercise of the Virtues of a Christian ; which is what the Apostle suggests, in the Reason mentioned in the Text, *that they which are approved, may be made manifest*, which imports not only that by the breaking out of Heresies it will be seen who are sound and able to endure the Trial, but also that the Virtues of such, by being thus brought to the Test, will receive Improvement, and shine out with the brighter Lustre. It will be proper therefore under this Head, to shew what those Virtues are, which will principally be exercised and improved by the breaking out of Heresies in the Church ; and they are either such as specially concern the Ministers of the Gospel, or such as concern the whole Community or Body of Christians in general.

To begin with the first : It is plain that the breaking out of Heresies in the Church of Christ, is a natural Call upon the Ministers of the Gospel, to stand up in Defence of the Faith. This is what St. Paul means, when writing to *Timothy*, he saith, *I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and*
the

the dead---preach the Word, be instant in Season, out of Season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and Doctrine. Why this Charge introduced with so much Earnestness and Solemnity? You see the Reason in the next Verses. For the Time will come when they will not endure sound Doctrine, but after their own Lusts shall they heap to themselves Teachers, having itching Ears. And they shall turn away their Ears from the Truth, and be turned unto Fables. But watch thou in all Things, endure Afflictions, do the Work of an Evangelist, make full Proof of thy Ministry. 2 Tim. iv. 1---5. In like Manner to the Ephesian Elders; Take Heed unto yourselves, and to all the Flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own Blood. For I know that after my Departure, shall grievous Wolves enter in among you, not sparing the Flock. Also of your own selves shall Men arise, speaking perverse Things, to draw away Disciples after them. Therefore watch. Act. xx. 28---31. Again to Titus, when describing the Qualifications of a Bishop, he says, he must be one who holds fast the faithful Word

he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound Doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the Gainsayers. For (adds he) there are many unruly and vain Talkers and Deceivers---whose Mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole Houses, teaching Things they ought not---Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be found in the Faith. Tit. i. 9---13. Now consider what Endowments of Mind are necessary to qualify Men for the Discharge of this weighty Branch of the Ministerial Function, and you will immediately perceive what Virtues will be improved by it. In the first Place it requires Wisdom and Knowledge to discover and lay open those Fallacies and Colourings by which the Broachers of Heresies varnish and disguise their Doctrines in order to deceive the simple and unwary. It requires also Meekness, Sagacity, Resolution, Patience and Constancy; to feel out the Tempers and Dispositions of Men; to suit their Applications to Circumstances and Seasons; to rebuke with Tenderness, where Tenderness is necessary; with Severity, where Severity is required; to exercise Discipline (if Discipline may be named in these Times) where

R Discipline

Discipline is wanting ; and in all Cases not to faint or grow weary, or be afraid of Consequences, but to be prepared alike for *good Report* or *evil Report*, to *endure Reproaches, Afflictions, Persecutions* for the *Gospel Sake*. These are undoubtedly great and noble Qualities ; and the Rise of Heresies will draw them forth, and bring them into Action. And the more they are practised, the more they will grow, since Perfection in every Thing is the Fruit of Exercise and Experience.

Now whilst the Ministers of the Gospel are thus increasing in Knowledge and in Wisdom, and in every virtuous and commendable Attainment, they will not fail of communicating a proportionable Degree of Improvement to the Flock of Christ. As the Exigencies of the Times lay them under a Necessity of studying the Scriptures with more Diligence, and explaining them with more Clearness, the true Faith will every where strike the deeper Root, as the true Grounds and Reasons of it will every where be better understood ; and whilst they shew a Conscience in discharging their Duties, it will be an Encouragement to the People, not to be
wanting

wanting in theirs. The principal Virtue to be exercised by private Christians on such Occasions is Humility. For as Pride is one grand Source of Heresies, so nothing helps more to forward their Reception in the World and make them spread. Men should *take Heed* what and *whom they hear*, (Mark iv. 24.) And when they do hear, they should not be hasty and rash in determining, but proceed with the same Caution and Reserve, that every prudent Man thinks it right to use in other Matters of Weight and Concern; not building too securely upon their own Judgments, but consulting the wise and the good, and among these, those more especially who have the Care of their Souls. Implicit Faith, absolute Submission, we owe to none but God himself; but there is a proper Regard due to all, in Proportion to their Learning and Abilities, and to the Station they bear in the Church, by the Appointment of Christ. The Ministers of Christ are not infallible. And can you tell me who is infallible? But fallible as they are, they are not (I hope) liable to more Mistakes than other Men. Their Advice may not always give Satis-

faction : But seldom will it fail to minister Occasion for a *Second Thought* ; and how many Notions do Men pick up every Day, dishonourable to God and Religion, of which (if they would be at the Pains to think but twice) they would be quite ashamed !

You see now upon what Grounds the Reasoning of the Apostle rests. It is fit that Heresies should arise in the Church, because Man is a Probationer in this Life. Man is to be rewarded for his Virtue, and the Rise of Heresies is the Proof of Virtue, and contributes to its Growth and Improvement. Now all this supposes that a Man *has* Virtue. For where Virtue is *not*, Virtue cannot be improved ; and to bring a bad Man to the Trial, is only to expose him to Shame. If Men are industrious to know the Will of God, out of a sincere and honest Desire to practice it ; if they have *escaped the Pollutions that are in the World through Lust* : If they have mortified their Pride and their Vanity ; if there be in the Ministers of Christ an *Aptness to teach*, and in the People a Readiness to hear and be instructed ; in this Case, the more they are tried, the more they

they will each of them shine in their respective Capacities. But as the same Distemper which will purge a sound Constitution, will weaken and destroy a sickly and infirm one; so in our spiritual Concerns, *They who are approved will be made manifest, whilst (by the same Application) evil Men and Seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.* 2 Tim. iii 13.

Give me Leave now from the whole to observe to you by Way of Inference, how much it concerns us for the Sake of the common Faith, to secure the Principles of common Virtue and Honesty. The Gospel was intended to promote moral Virtue, and is indeed an excellent Means of Improvement. But moral Virtue is the Ground-work even of the Gospel itself, as it is in a good Degree necessary to prepare Men for the Reception of it at first, and to secure them from Apostacy afterwards. There are some Doctrines of the Gospel which sensual and immoral Men can by no Means stoop to. Of this Sort, are the Doctrines of *taking up the Cross,* and *abstaining from fleshly Lusts*; for which those who are not in a good Measure pre-

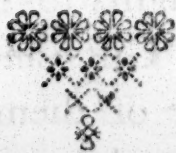
pared, will very soon be offended. When Heresies attack Men on this weak Side, by offering any Thing in Abatement of the Strictness of the Gospel Terms; by setting them loose from Restraint and Discipline; or by any Arts, as it were, cooking and seasoning Christianity to a vicious Taste; they seldom fail of meeting with Encouragement. And even when they do not directly affect the practical Virtues, bad Men are apt to catch at them; for there is that in an immoral Temper, which taints the whole Constitution of the Soul; and Vices as well as Virtues, though seemingly remote, have a natural Alliance the one with the other. Every immoral Action is an Offence against Truth and Reason, and the Authority of the great Law-giver; and when our Regard to these, which are the great Corner Stone of Religion is weakened, Religion, in the whole Extent and Compass of it, grows crazy and infirm, just as a Building grows weaker in all its Parts, when any one Pillar is taken away, which helps to support and keep up the whole.

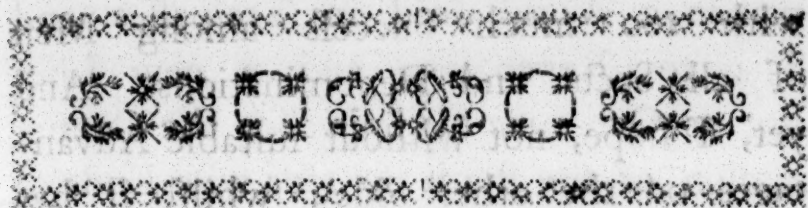
Therefore when any Age abounds with Luxury, with Vanity, with Pride, with

Sensua-

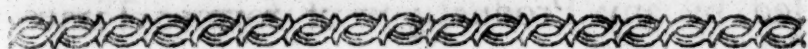
Sensuality, we are not to wonder that Heresies grow rife, and spread themselves far and wide, unless perchance (the Corruption encreasing) Heresy should at last degenerate into universal Atheism. I am afraid, we see much of this among us at this Time a-day. Some I know are wont to consider it as the Felicity of these Times, that religious Wars are no longer heard of; that there are not now those warm Contentions about Points of Faith, about Modes of Worship, or about Forms of Church Polity and Discipline, that there have been formerly. A Felicity it would be indeed, if there were Cause to believe, that Christians are in these Points come to a better Agreement among themselves. But as the same Distinctions are still subsisting, it must be plain to any common Observer, that the true Reason of this *Composure*, is not because our Distempers are cured, but because we are *stupidified*, and cannot feel them. No Doubt, it is a very effectual Way of silencing all Disputes about the particular Doctrines of the Gospel, if Men can be persuaded that the whole is a Cheat; this is the Thing that for some Years past, has been carrying on

with too much Success among Men of all Sects and Denominations. And yet, I hope, not without suitable Advantages on the other Side; whilst it has raised up a Spirit in the Friends of Christianity, some of them to endeavour well, and others to justify it, with that Weight of Reasoning, which is scarce to be equalled by any Productions of former Times. The Truth is, our present Work is not to revive old Disputes, in Points which concern only the Beauty and Comeliness and Perfection of Christianity; but to apply all Diligence to save the vital Parts. In this let all Sects and Parties join; and may God prosper the Endeavours of all that shall lend a helping Hand to this great and good Work, that the Name of his Son may be glorified throughout the Earth!





S E R M O N XIV.



I JOHN IV. I.

Beloved, believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they be of God; because many false Prophets are gone out into the World.

THE Feast which we have so lately celebrated being the Commemoration of that remarkable Work of Providence in sending the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles and first Believers; it naturally turns our Thoughts to the Consideration of his manifold Gifts and Graces. The most remarkable of them was the Power of working Miracles; necessary at that Time to give Evidence of the Doctrines taught as coming from God, and to a-
waken

waken a World dead in Trespasses and Sins to Repentance and a new Life. But as God gave his Spirit for the Confirmation of the Faith so (for wise Ends of his Providence) he permitted evil Spirits to arise in Opposition to his true Messengers; *Many false Prophets* (says the Apostle) *are gone out into the World*, which was but agreeable to what our Saviour had foretold, Matt. xxiv. 5. *Many shall come in my Name saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many.* And Verse xxiv. *There shall arise false Christs and false Prophets.* By what Ways and Means these false Prophets gained Credit to their Impostures, we can not say particularly. Our Saviour says that *they should shew great Signs and Wonders*; and no Doubt they boasted of some extraordinary Matters as is natural in such Cases. Barjesus the *false Prophet* who withstood Paul (Acts xiii. 6, 8.) is called a *Sorcerer*; and of Simon it is said that he *used Sorcery and bewitched the People of Samaria* giving out that *himself was some great one*; and such was his Success, that *they all gave Heed from the least to the greatest, saying, This Man is the great Power of God.* * This was said of the

* Acts 8, 9, 10.

the Multitude, who are ever ready to be imposed upon by Appearances, and greedy after new and strange Things.

To guard against such Mistakes as these we have the Rule in the Text; *Believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they be of God.* And how were they to be tried? It follows in the next Verse, *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every Spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come into the Flesh is of God; and every Spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh is not of God.* The literal Translation of the Words is, *Every Spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ who is come in the Flesh, is of God.* This is the Touchstone. Do these Men pretending to be Prophets teach that Jesus is of God? Is the Purpose of their Doctrine to lead you to Christ, or to draw you off from Christ? If the first; (supposing that you have otherwise no reasonable Exception) follow them, for they are of God: If the last; (how plausible soever their Pretensions may otherwise be) reject them, for they are not of God. The Rule rests upon this plain uncontested Maxim of common Sense, that God cannot contradict himself; and therefore allowing it to have been sufficient-

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ly proved by the Miracles wrought by Christ and his Apostles, that he was the Messiah ; no Spirit that should deny him to be such, could be the Spirit of God.

You will observe that the Rule is given to Christians, that is to those who convinced by the Miracles wrought in Confirmation of Christ's Doctrine, had already received him as a Prophet of God ; and to such only it was proper. For had the Truth of Christ's Mission been the Point in Question, it must have been decided by Arguments of another Nature. But taking it as a first Principle that Jesus is of God (which is a Point in which all Christians are supposed to be fully satisfied) it will undeniable follow, that whoever opposes his Doctrine, whatever he may pretend to, cannot be of God. The Rule is the same with what Moses gave to the People of the Jews in a like Case, and the Reason of it is the same. *If there arise among you a Prophet or a Dreamer of Dreams and giveth thee a Sign, or a Wonder, and the Sign or the Wonder come to pass wherof he spake unto thee saying, let us go after other Gods (which thou hast not known) and let us serve them ; thou shalt not hearken unto the Words of that Prophet or that Dreamer*

Dreamer of Dreams, for the Lord your God proveth you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your Heart and with all your Soul. The Jews are here supposed to be under full Conviction, that the Lord was their God, by those Evidences which he had given them of his Power and Providence in bringing them forth out of the Land of Egypt; in consequence of which Persuasion it rightly followed, that if a Prophet or a Dreamer of Dreams, shewing a Sign or a Wonder, should arise, tempting them to serve other Gods, such Prophet or Dreamer of Dreams was not to be hearkened unto. It was upon this Principle, their Allegiance to God, that their great regard to Moses was founded, whom they considering as the Messenger of God, looked upon a departure from his Law, as a Forfeiture of their Allegiance to God; and this was the Cause of their rejecting the Gospel: The Mistake in which lay not in this, that the Rule was bad, but that it was ill applied. If Christ had set himself up in Opposition to Moses, the Jews could not have received him by this Rule; but this Christ disclaims. *Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets, I am*
not

not come to destroy, but to fulfil. Matt. v. 17. Christ was *foreshewed* by the Law and the Prophets; and the Law was not properly abrogated by the Gospel but expired of itself, the End for which it was given being fully answered. The Jews therefore would not have *departed* from Moses by following Christ; but in rejecting him, they rejected both him and Moses too.

By what Criterion, when the Case so happens that two Prophets who declare contrary Doctrines and whose Mission it yet in Question; by what Rule (I say) in such a Case the true Prophet is to be distinguished from the false, * is a Point quite of another Nature; and the entering into it at this Time would lead me too far from the Thing I have in View, which is to point out to Christians a safe Way how to judge of some Pretensions to the Spirit in these Days. Miracles have been long since ceased; but the Gifts of the Spirit are not ceased nor ever will cease, for the Holy Ghost was sent to *abide with* his faithful People *for ever*. John xiv. 16. Now as there was in the Age of Miracles false Pretenders, who under Colour of the *extraordi-*

* See my Boyle's Lecture, p. 353. &c. to 385.

rary Gifts of the Holy Ghost, drew Disciples after them in prejudice of the Gospel Doctrine; so there are, and have been in various Ages of the Church, Pretenders (*true or false is the Point in Question; but Pretenders, I say, there are*) who boast themselves of Gifts of the *extraordinary* Kind, and talk of inward *Illuminations*, inward *Convictions*, inward *Callings*, in such a Sort as to distinguish themselves, and set themselves up as Leaders of Parties, in disparagement of others, who do not pretend to the same Gifts. The Apostle's Rule I conceive is as good in one Case as in the other. Let us a little consider the Extent of it.

The Rule in the Letter of it reaches no farther than to such Cases where Pretenders to the Spirit deny that Jesus is the Christ. But in the View and Intention of it, it is certain that every Rule must go so far as the Reason of it will go; and the Reason of this Rule will carry it to all particular Cases, where Christ's Doctrine is opposed and contradicted, as well as to the general Case of totally renouncing his divine Mission; for the Spirit of God can no more deny Christ's Doctrine to be true, than it can deny Jesus to be the Christ; because if

Jesus

Jesus is the Christ he is of God, and if he is of God his Doctrine must be true in the Whole and every Part of it. The Doctrine of Christ concerns either our Faith or our Practice; and the Scriptures are the Standard and Measure of both; which were delivered to us at first by Men under the Guidance of the Spirit of Christ, (that is, of God) who gave the same Evidence of their Mission that Christ did. We may therefore be assured upon the best and strongest Reasons, that whoever he be who pretending to the Spirit teacheth any other Matters to be believed than those which are contained in Scripture, he is a Deceiver. If such Doctrine is *contrary* to the Scripture the Case is clear: For though Men may contradict the Spirit, the Spirit (as I said before) cannot contradict itself. And if such Doctrine is not contrary to Scripture, but delivered to us only as a *farther* Manifestation of God's Will, we are not bound to receive it nor ought we to receive it but upon the same Evidence by which the old original Doctrines were confirmed, that is, not without the Evidence of Miracles; and therefore if a Man pretending to the Spirit, but not proving his Pretensions by the Evidence

dence of Miracles, delivers any *new* Doctrine, which though not contradicted by Scripture cannot yet be proved by Scripture, his very Want of that Evidence is a Confutation of his Pretensions; because if we are not justified in receiving any Thing as from God, without the proper Evidence of its coming from God; we may certainly conclude that when he hath any farther Manifestations to make, which are not contained in the old, original Revelation, he will give us that Evidence.

If we apply this Reasoning to Matters of Practice it will bring us to the same Conclusion. The Scripture exhorts us to *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*; to be just, sober and temperate; and to attend to Works of Piety and Charity: And when a Man tells me I must do these Things I listen to him; not because he tells me so, but, because I find them written in my Heart or in my Bible. But if he should tell me that I must fast so many Days in the Week; that I must pray so many Hours in the Day; that I must attend upon such or such Religious Exercises; that I must wear such or such Apparel; that I must give such a Part of my Goods to the Poor; or lay down

any other particular Rules which I find not prescribed in the Scriptures, nor by any Authority established by the Scriptures; I can receive such Instructions only as Matters of Advice and Counsel, to be followed so far as I shall judge it reasonable. And if he shall offer to abridge me of this Liberty to which I am left by the Word God, and pretend the Authority of the *Spirit* for so doing; he must shew his Credentials, or I shall be justified in concluding that the Spirit which directs and moves him to such Things is not the Spirit of God.

The Deceit will yet be more manifest, when Matters of this Sort are carried beyond all Bounds of Reason and Prudence. As suppose that any under Colour of being spiritually employed should neglect the Duties of their Callings to the Hurt of Society, or in Prejudice of those who by any Claim are entitled to the Benefit of their Labours. Weak Men may run into such Mistakes as these, and bad ones may lay hold of them as a Handle to excuse themselves in Idleness; but God cannot be the Author of such Practices, and therefore you may be very secure, that whoever they

be who are guilty of them themselves, or encourage them in others, they are not led by the Spirit of God. It is the same Thing as to immoral Practices of any other Kind. To be *carnally minded*, does very ill suit with the Character of *Spiritual Men*; which is so well understood, that whenever Impostors have any Designs to carry on that are contrary to good Manners, they always take Care to keep them out of sight. But there is another Thing very material to be considered, but not commonly so much attended to in such Cases as it ought to be; and that is an open Violation of the standing Rules and Orders of the Church which God hath appointed for mutual Edification. Where there is a Church there must be a Ministry; for the Church is a Society of Men among whom the Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments of Christ are duly administered. If the Word of God is to be preached, somebody's Office it must be to preach it; and if the Sacraments are to be administered, somebody's Business it must be to attend the Administration of them; and in whomsoever it be that this Authority rests, there must be the proper Evidence of such Authority, otherwise they cannot be received.

ed and acknowledged as the Ministers of Christ. Now consider what Provision the Gospel hath made for these Things. When Christ sent forth his Apostles he gave them the Power of Miracles, which was an Evidence of their Call to the Ministry beyond all Exception. But when Miracles ceased, the Church was not to cease. This introduced the Necessity of an *external Appointment* by Persons authorized for that Purpose, of the Use of which we have frequent Examples in Scripture; nor can it be made appear that in those Times any Persons presumed to exercise the Office of Ministers in the Church, but those who were thus externally appointed, by Apostles, or apostolical Men, by them authorized, except they could vouch their Mission, as the Apostles did, by the Evidence of Miracles. This was the Case of St. Paul who styles himself *an Apostle not of Men neither by Man but by Jesus Christ.* * Jesus Christ revealed himself to him immediately, as he had taught the other Apostles immediately; and he had the same Proof of his Mission as they had, viz. *The Demonstration of the Spirit and Power.* This Account
then

* Gal. i. 1.

men shews; that the Gospel knows but two Ways of calling Men to the Ministry, viz. an *external, mediate* Appointment by *Persons authorized*, and an *internal immediate* Appointment *supported* by the Evidence of Miracles. As to the third Way, which some Men talk of, viz. an internal, immediate Appointment *unsupported* by Miracles, the Gospel knows it not. Nor in the Nature and Reason of the Case, is it credible that there can be any such Thing as a Call or Appointment to the Ministry unsupported either by Miracles or the external Appointment of authorized Persons: For a Call to the Ministry without Evidence of such a Call is equivalent to none. And if there is neither the Evidence of Miracles, nor an external Appointment, what Evidence is there left? Is it enough for a Man to say "I have the Spirit, and the Spirit within tells me that I must preach the Gospel?" What is there so easy as such Pretensions as these? In Matters which concern a Man's *private* Conduct, he may be indulged in believing that he is called by the Spirit, if he is called to nothing but what is becoming the Character of a Chris-

tian; but it favours of Frenzy to think that the Spirit can call a Man to a publick Office in the Church, and leave him destitute of any Evidence to shew that he is so called. For as the Minister is answerable to God in the Execution of his Office, so are the People in attending or not attending upon his Instructions; which yet they cannot be if they have no Rule whereby to know, who come to them under Christ's Commission, and who set up upon their own Authority. Let this then rest with you as another Maxim upon which you may safely rely, that whoever pretends a Call to the Ministry to which he hath received no Authority by external Appointment, falsely pretends to the Spirit. The Want of Evidence refutes his Pretensions.

The next and last Thing I shall offer to your Consideration is this; that as by the Scripture Rule no Man ought to take upon himself to officiate as a Minister in the Church without being called thereunto by authorized Persons; so neither can any Minister lawfully called, exercise his Function in a lawful Manner, but in due Subordination to the same Authority. For it is

not

not more necessary to the Edification of the Church, that none but fit Persons be called to administer in the same, than that the Word of God be preached, and the Sacraments be administered, at such Times, and Seasons, and under such Circumstances of outward Order and Decency, as best provide for the Exigencies of the People, and most Help to make them effectual Means in working their Salvation. In the earliest Ages of the Church Men were not left merely to their own Direction in these respects; but general Rules of Discipline were agreed on, and settled, to serve as Directions both to Ministers and People. In those Times there was little room for Disputes in these Things; for they were either settled by the Apostles themselves in the several Churches which they planted, or they were to be settled by those whom they had appointed to preside over these Churches, and who either by the Instructions they received from them, or by their extraordinary Endowments and Gifts, were well qualified to order Things in a proper Manner. And now, though Churches differ in these Points, as they lawfully may differ, (since

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there may be various Forms of Church Discipline, all of them useful and profitable, but none of them precisely commanded in Scripture) yet I conceive that when a reasonable Method of Discipline is settled in any Communion by publick Authority, it is not lawful for Ministers within the same Communion, of their own private Motion, to break in upon that Order; especially if it be considered, that the Acceptance of the ministerial Office within such Communion implies an Assent to the publick Order thereof; if there be not also express Stipulations required that they will submit to be directed by the publick Authority in such Cases. It is true, that no Assent implied or express, can so tie a Man down to the Orders of any Communion, as not to leave him at Liberty afterwards to alter his Opinion if he sees cause for it. And in this Case, if Errors in Doctrine or in Worship appear to him of Consequence sufficient to justify a Separation, he may separate: Or if (for the same Reason) a general Reformation is necessary; it may and ought to be attempted, though it may not always be possible to effect it without departing

parting, in some Degree and in some Respects, from established Rules. But when a Church is right in all essential Points, and so acknowledged by the Persons themselves who receive their Orders from it, and hold constant Communion with it; to see such Persons, upon frivolous Pretences, breaking in upon all publick Order; preaching to those to whom they are not sent; gathering together disorderly Assemblies, and giving the right Hand of Fellowship to the most ignorant and illiterate, who without any Call to the Ministry besides their own pretended Illuminations, set themselves up for Preachers, and draw Disciples after them; to see this (I say) is a most shocking Scandal, and seems to be a new Opening to that State of Things, which once threw the whole Nation into Convulsions, and ended in the Ruin both of Church and State.

With Respect then to such as these, my Advice is short and plain --- *Go not after them; for their Word will eat as doth a Canker.* 2 Tim. ii. 17. Attend to the Means that are offered to you in the Communion under which you have been bred,
which

which are sufficient to make *you wise unto Salvation*. I have no other Advice to give with Respect to those who separate themselves from us. *Follow them not*. For why should you follow them? They will tell you that in Conscience they cannot communicate with us. Be that between God and themselves. You have nothing to do with it. But surely your Conscience, if it tells you (as I trust it does) that you may and ought to communicate with us, is, at least, as good as theirs. They will tell you farther, that they have the Spirit; and so, I hope, we have all of us, in a Manner suitable to the present Dispensation; and what ever it may be that they may pretend to as peculiar to themselves, take Notice that, whether real or pretended only, you can take nothing from them upon the Authority of this Plea. It is not now as it was in the Days of the Apostles. They came with the visible Marks of the Power of the Spirit working in them, and speaking by them; and the Doctrines which they taught were founded upon the Testimony of the Spirit. But now that Miracles are ceased, and the Operations of the Spirit
are

are invisible; the Conclusion lies the contrary Way, and Doctrines cannot be proved by the Testimony of the Spirit, but the Testimony of the Spirit must be judged of by the Doctrines taught. In a few Words; if they are able to justify their Separation by the Word of God, we submit: If not, we are to reject their pretended Illuminations, which would lead us from it, as mere Delusions.



200. XV. M O N XV.



S E R M O N XV.



MATT. xiii. 25---30.

The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a Man, which sowed good Seed in his Field; but while Men slept his Enemy came and sowed Tares among the Wheat, and went his Way. But when the Blade was sprung up, and brought forth Fruit, then appeared the Tares also. So the Servants of the Householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good Seed in thy Field? From whence then hath it Tares? He said unto them, an Enemy hath done this. The Servants said unto him? Wilt thou that we go and gather them up? But he said, nay; lest while ye gather up the Tares, ye root up also the Wheat with them.

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Let both grow together until the Harvest; and in the Time of the Harvest I will say to the Reapers; gather ye together first the Tares, and bind them in Bundles to burn them; but gather the Wheat into my Barn.

 E cannot mistake the general Drift and Meaning of this Parable, since our Saviour hath been his own Interpreter. *He that soweth the good Seed (says he) is the Son of Man. The Field is the World. The good Seed are the Children of the Kingdom; But the Tares are the Children of the wicked one. The Enemy that sowed them is the Devil. The Harvest is the End of the World; and the Reapers are the Angels. As therefore the Tares are gathered and burnt in the Fire; so shall it be in the End of the World. The Son of Man shall send forth his Angels, and they shall gather out of his Kingdom all Things that offend, and them which do Iniquity. And shall cast them into a Furnace of Fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of Teeth. Vers. 38---43.*

But there are some Particulars in this Account, which want Explanation.

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He that soweth the good Seed is the Son of Man, that is Christ himself. Therefore the good Seed must mean the Gospel by him published to Mankind; which in the New Testament is frequently compared to Seed. Thus in the Parable of the Sower in this very Chapter, the Seed is explained to be the Word of the Kingdom, that is the Doctrine of the Gospel, Verse 19. So again Verse 31. it is compared to a Grain of Mustard Seed. So Mark iv. 26. The Kingdom of God is as if a Man should cast Seed into the Ground, &c. Therefore when our Saviour says in his Explanation, that the good Seed are the Children of the Kingdom, his Meaning is, that they are the Produce of that good Seed; those in whom the Word of God fructifies and grows up into a holy Conversation; and in this Light the Comparison stands in the remaining Parts of the Parable, where the Children of the Kingdom are made to correspond to the Blade and Wheat; their Works as plainly distinguishing them from the Children of the wicked one, as the Colour, Shape, or other Accidents peculiar to the several Plants, distinguish Wheat from Tares.

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As the *good Seed* signifies the Gospel : so the *Field* (which our Saviour interprets to be the *World*) must mean the World considered as enlightened by the Gospel ; or those to whom the Preaching of the Gospel came, which had not the same Effect upon all that heard it, as the Parable of the Sower plainly shews ; where it is said of those who believed not, that the *wicked one*, or (as St. Luke calls him, Chap. viii. Verse 12.) *the Devil catcheth away that which was sown*. So here it is said that the *Tares* are the Children of the *wicked one* ; and he that sowed them is the *Devil*. Which is intended to teach us, that as the good Providence of God is always ready to use Means to save us ; so the Devil and his Agents, are ever as busy to work our Ruin ; and that in all Ages of the World, and under every Dispensation, how well so ever calculated, and contrived to work a general Reformation, there will be wicked Men as well as good ; because there will ever be Instruments at hand to counterwork the Designs of Providence, and to infuse evil Principles into the Hearts of Men. The Parable says, that the Enemy sowed his Tares among

among the Wheat *while Men slept*; which may seem perhaps to cast some Imputation of Carelessness upon the Husbandmen. But it is not said that these Men were asleep when they ought to have been awake and about their Business. There must be a Time for Sleep as well as for Work; and therefore I think that all that this Circumstance implies is, that the Devil *took his Opportunity*, as be we ever so careful to guard and watch the Field of Christ, Opportunities there will and must be.

As the Seeds grew up, the Wheat and the Tares were quickly discerned, the one from the other. What now do the Servants advise? Why to pull the Tares up by the Roots. But the Master said, not so; *lest while ye gather the Tares, ye root up also the Wheat with them. Let both grow together until the Harvest; and in the Time of Harvest I will say to the Reapers, Gather ye together first the Tares, and bind them in Bundles to burn them; but gather the Wheat into my Barn.*

There is another Parable which begins at the 47th Verse of this Chapter that comes to the same Conclusion.

The

The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Net that was cast into the Sea, and gathered of every Kind: Which when it was full they drew to Shore, and sat down and gathered the good into Vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the End of the World. The Angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just; and shall cast them into the Furnace of Fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of Teeth.

The Difference between the two Parables is this; that whereas the Parable of the *Tares* sets forth, that notwithstanding the preaching of the Gospel, there would be bad Men in the World, who through the Agency of the Devil and his Instruments would reject it: This Parable shews that the Case would be the same among those who should accept the Gospel, who would not all of them be found to come up to what by their Profession they ought to be. Wheat is a distinct Grain from Tares. This therefore is a fit Emblem to represent Christians, as they stood distinguished from the profane, unbelieving Part of the World, among whom they were sown and grew. On the other hand,

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the

the Christian Church considered as a Society separated from the rest of the World by external Profession; is as fitly represented by the Comparison of Fishes enclosed in a Net, and thereby separated from the rest of the Fishes of the Sea, with whom they before swam, and were promiscuously mixed together. When Christ called Peter and Andrew, who were Fishermen by Trade, to be his Disciples; he told them, he would *make them Fishers of Men*. Matt. iv. 19. Which is a very plain Allusion to their Office as Preachers of the Gospel. The Gospel then is the *Net* that was *cast into the Sea*, to gather as many as should accept it into one common Inclosure; and as a Net takes in all Fishes that fall within its Reach, good and bad, small and great without Difference or Distinction; so the first Preachers of the Gospel admitted all to the Privilege of Christian Fellowship, who gave in their Names to Christ, and made open Profession of the Faith and Hope by him revealed and published to Mankind; who were some good and others bad, as in the other Case, it most commonly happens. But as all Fishes which may chance to be caught together

in a Net, are not fit to be served up at Table, so neither are all who profess themselves Christians meet *for the Kingdom of God*. A Separation therefore there must be; and *when* and *by whom* the Separation will be made, the Text informs us. *It shall be at the End of the World, when the Net is full and shall be drawn to Shore; For then shall the Angels come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the Furnace of Fire, there shall be wailing and gnashing of Teeth.*

It is to this *final* Separation, by which good Men shall be consigned to everlasting Happiness, and bad Men to everlasting Misery, that the Parable refers. With any *other* Separation that the Church considered as a visible Society on Earth may have Authority to enjoin, for *Edification* and not for *Destruction*, the Parable hath nothing to do. But both Parables center in this general Point, that neither in the Church, nor out of the Church, bad Men are to be destroyed by the Hand of Man, merely because they are such; but should be suffered to live God's appointed Time, who hath reserved to himself the

Work of severing them from the Good at the Day of Judgment.

I say expressly that bad Men are not to be destroyed by the Hand of Man *merely because they are such*; for no Doubt our Saviour did not hereby intend to tie up the Hands of the Civil Magistrate, nor hinder him from destroying bad Men, so far as is necessary for the common Security of States and Kingdoms. When a Malefactor is taken off by the Hand of Justice, it is not merely because he is a bad Man, but because he is a publick Enemy. The mere Wickedness of any Man does not give me a Right over his Life; but every Man has a Right to preserve himself from Violence; and if the Wickedness of a Man is of that Nature that his Life will not stand with the Safety of innocent Persons in the Enjoyment of their Lives and Properties, it is lawful, no Doubt, to cut him off: And with Respect to such as these, God's appointed Time for the Period of this mortal Life, must be said to come when the Time for Justice is come, by the Magistrate's Authority. For *HE is the MINISTER of God to execute Wrath upon him that doth*
Evil.

Evil. But these Cases excepted, no Man's Wickedness, how great soever, will justify his Destruction. To God he is a Sinner, and to him alone the Judgment belongs.

The Reason assigned in the Parable, why the Tares were not to be rooted up is, *lest while ye gather up the Tares, ye root up the Wheat also.* When different Grains are sown together in the same Field, there is commonly that Closeness and Connexion between the Plants that spring from them, that if you pull up one, you must pull up both. The Case is the same with Respect to good and bad Men, who may have that Dependence of the one upon the other, as to be necessary to each others mutual Aid. A bad Man may be the Father of good Children, and have many Friends and Relations whose Interests are wrapt up in his. If every Drunkard, or Whoremonger, or profane Person, were to be put to Death, what Disorders would it cause in Kingdoms and in Families? There are few Men so bad as not to be good for something. A bad Man may be a good Husbandman, a good Artificer, a good Magistrate, or a

good Soldier ; upon all which the Welfare of Society most evidently depends.

But we may be allowed to carry our Reflexions a little farther, and consider the Relation that the permitting bad and good Men to live together, has to the moral State of the World. Bad Men are the Devil's Instruments, and, whilst such, are the Promoters of Vice and Wickedness. But bad Men may themselves become good, and be the Instruments of reforming others ; and with a View to this Case it may be said, that the rooting up the Tares would be rooting up the pure Grain ; for it is all one in effect, whether you root up a good Plant, or a bad one that would become a good one. There is great Reason therefore, why bad Men should be suffered to live God's Time, *viz.* that they may have Space for Repentance, without which, all the Promises of the Gospel would be offered in vain. He that repents not now, may repent some Time hence. He that is hurried into Vice by the Heat and Giddiness of Youth, may grow serious when a more advanced Age and Experience of Things, shall have cooled his Passions and ripened his

his Judgment. This is an Event that should never be trusted to, as a Reason to hinder any Man from taking the first and earliest Opportunities of beginning to do well; but it is a very good Reason for the Patience and Forbearance of God, in not immediately cutting off Sinners; and why, if he does not think fit to do the Work himself, should he permit any Creature upon Earth to do it for him?

In the next Place; the permitting bad Men to live among the good, may be of Use and Advantage to the good, as it furnishes Opportunity for the Trial and Improvement of their Virtues. If there were no bad Men in the World, there would be more Rectitude in the World; but less of that which we properly term Virtue. To be virtuous is to adhere to what is right, in Opposition to Temptations to the contrary; and therefore we commonly say that where there are no Temptations to offend, there can be no Virtue. But Virtue there ought to be where a Reward is proposed to Well-doing; for what is the Use of a Reward but to stand as a Ballance against Temptation? Bad Men are the Tempters of

the good ; and as such, put them into a Condition to give Proof of their Virtues, and thereby to merit that Reward which is due to Virtue ; which the Scripture assures us, shall always bear a Proportion to the Greatness of our Temptations. *Blessed is the Man that endureth Temptation ; for when he is tried, he shall receive the Crown of Life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Jam. i. 12.* So our blessed Saviour. *Matt. v. 11, 12. Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all Manner of Evil against you falsely for my Sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven.* To be reviled, to be persecuted, to be spoken Evil of, is the common Treatment which good Men meet with from the bad ; the Engines which they employ to make them the Children of Darkness like themselves. The more we bear of this, the better it will be for us if we bear it patiently, and with the Testimony of a good Conscience. And so it is in all other Ways of Trial. When Sinners entice us, when they would persuade us, when they would beguile us by Artifice and Deceit, when they would pervert our

Reasons

Reasons or bribe our Passions; all this will turn to our Account if we hold fast our Integrity, and come off victorious.

Add to this, that as bad Men tempt good ones to sin, so they give them many Warnings against it; in those many fearful Consequences that attend upon vicious Courses. The proper Support of Virtue is the Recompence of a Life to come; but as a present Help (which our Infirmities often call for) the Providence of God hath so ordered it, that Sin frequently carries with it its own Punishment. When we see a covetous Man, we see a Wretch. When we see an extravagant and a debauched Man, we see Poverty, Shame and Sicknefs, following close at his Heels. These, and such Instances (of which there is great Variety in the World) serve as Notices to others, who may learn that the Fear of God is the truest Wisdom; and that when we venture into forbidden Paths, our Happiness in this World, as well as in the next, lies at Stake.

It were endless to mention the many Ways in which the Virtues of good Men may receive Improvement from the Excesses

cesses of the bad. A griping and extorting Father may gather together that Substance, which the Son may dispense to the Comfort of Thousands. Most of the Miseries of Life take their Rise from Some-body's Wickedness; and what a Field for Virtue to shew and exercise itself, are the Miseries of our Fellow-Creatures! Cloathing the Naked, feeding the Hungry, comforting the Afflicted, the Poor and the Fatherless and the Widow, are Actions which hold high Rank in the Catalogue of the Christian Virtues; and the Subjects for these Virtues to work upon are commonly furnished out by the bad Part of Mankind. So that upon this, and all the Accounts just now mentioned, taking bad Men away from the Face of the Earth, would be, (according to our Saviour's Comparifon) *pulling up the Wheat* along with the *Tares*: For it is the same Thing whether you pull up the Corn, or take away the Ground upon which it should grow and thrive.

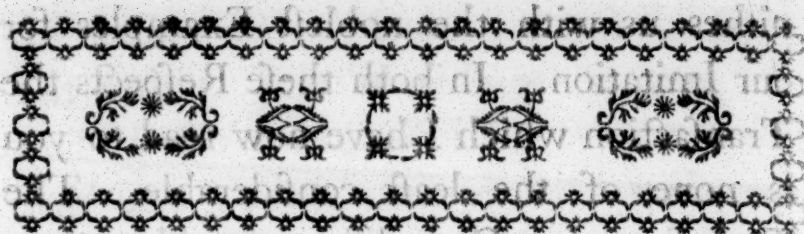
Rightly then doth the Conclusion follow, *Let both grow together until the Harvest*; stay till God calls us hence, and removes us into another World; and leave

it to Him *there* to make the proper Distinction. That indeed will be a proper Place for it; where we shall not have Bodies of Flesh and Blood to be fed and cloathed; where there will be neither Strength nor Weakness, Youth nor Age; none of those Defects in being, which make the Help of one necessary to another; but God will be to us all in all. That too will be the proper *Time*; for then our Trial will be over, and we shall have no Virtues to be improved. The Books will then be shut up, and the Accounts ballanced, that *every one may receive according to what he hath done, whether it be good or whether it be bad.* 2 Cor. v. 10. Then will God sever the Tares from the Wheat, the good Men from the bad. *The Son of Man shall send forth his Angels, and they shall gather out of his Kingdom all Things that offend, and them which do Iniquity; and they shall cast them into a Furnace of Fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of Teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father.* Let us all wait the Event of this last and universal Reckoning, and with Patience
bear

bear the Contradiction of Sinners, as knowing that their Day is coming on. Let us take Heed that we be not entangled in their wicked Works, which is the only Thing that can hurt us. Molest and disturb us they may, defeat us they never can, if we be true to ourselves; nay more than this, whilst they intend to hurt us, they will be the Means of exalting us, to higher and more excellent Degrees of Bliss, if we will make Use of those Opportunities they throw in our Way, to the Improvement of our Virtues, and the laying a surer and a wider Foundation for an Interest in Heaven. What can bad Men do if we take Care to keep ourselves pure from the Contagion of their Vices? The utmost of their Efforts can reach no farther than the Body. *But fear not them (says Christ) that kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do.* Luke xii. 4. To kill the Body, what is it? To cut off a little from a very short Span. To hasten us the faster to our true Bliss. To release us from Pain, and Sorrow and Care, and throw us into the Arms of our heavenly Father, and to the Joys that are there prepared

prepared for us. And let us remember that even as to this World, neither the Devil nor all his Instruments can go farther than God permits them; and that he who *numbreth the very Hairs of our Head, and without whom, not so much as a Sparrow falleth to the Ground,* will protect and defend his Servants, and make *all Things work together for Good to them that love him.*

It is no uncommon Thing for vain Man to pretend to be wiser than his Maker; and as there have been those who have fancied they could mend the material Fabrick of the Universe, there are others who think they could mend the moral System. Almost all the common Objections against Religion resolve themselves at last, into this foolish, profane Conceit. But wise Men the more they consider these Things, the less Cause they will see to find Fault; and in the lowest Posture of Adoration, will fall down before their great Creator and say, *O Lord how manifold are thy Works, in Wisdom hast thou made them all.* Ps. civ. 24.



S E R M O N XVI.



GEN. xxii. 1, 2.

*And it came to pass after these Things, that
God did tempt Abraham, and said unto
him----*

*Take now thy Son, thine only Son Isaac
whom thou lovest, and get thee into the
Land of Moriah, and offer him there for
a burnt Offering, upon one of the Moun-
tains which I shall tell thee of.*

I T is the great Excellency of the
holy Bible, and that which above
all Things recommends it to our
diligent Meditation, that containing a His-
tory of Providence from the Beginning of
the World, it leads us to the best under-
standing of the Wisdom of God, and fur-
nishes

nithes us with the noblest Examples for
 our Imitation. In both these Respects the
 Transaction which I have now read to you
 is none of the least considerable. The
 Text says that God did *tempt* Abraham;
 that is, he took the Course here mention-
 ed, to *prove* or *try* the Sincerity of his
 Obedience. Not as if the Searcher of
 Hearts was before ignorant whether Abra-
 ham's Obedience was sincere or not: But
 he did that, which supposing it to have
 been a Thing in question, would have
 shewn it. God represents himself as act-
 ing after the Manner of Men who know
 not the Heart but by the Evidence of the
 external Conduct. *Now I know that thou*
fearst me---So would an earthly Parent
 say, who to try the Temper of his Son,
 of whose Disposition towards him, he
 was not fully satisfied, should lay upon
 him some hard Command to be perform-
 ed. But when we hear such Words as
 these from the Mouth of God, we are
 to understand them as carrying no other
 Meaning than this, "By this it is evi-
 dent, or by this thou hast given full
 Proof, that thou fearest me," *seeing*
thou

thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son from me.

In discoursing upon this Case, I shall give some general Account of the Reasons of the Trials of Providence; and then consider more particularly wherein the Wisdom and Goodness of God appears in this Trial of Abraham.

As the Trials of Providence work nothing with Respect to God, it will follow that the whole Reason of them must result from some Relation of Congruity or Fitness, which they bear to the State of Mankind in this present World. The present State is a State leading us to a future and a better, which is to be the Reward of our Virtues, and therefore whatever contributes to the Improvement of Virtue is fit for us in this State. And this the Trials of Providence will do, if we will take Care to make a proper Use of them. For

I. They are an effectual Means to convince us of God's Sovereign Dominion, and to shew that whatever good Things we enjoy, they are the Effect of his Bounty and Goodness. For he certainly bespeaks himself the Author of all Good, who
shews

shews that he can dispose of it to whomsoever he pleases ; and the Power of God is not more visible in giving us what we want, than it is in with-holding or in taking it away. The commanding Abraham to sacrifice his Son did as loudly proclaim the Sovereign of the World, as the *quickenings the Deadness of Sarah's Womb* ; and what could the good old Patriarch think of it but this, that God was now calling upon him to restore to him his own ? The Case is the same with Respect to all other worldly Blessings, which are no otherwise *ours* than by God's Permission ; and to make us sensible of this, it is sometimes necessary to cross our Inclinations, and shew us that we are not at Liberty to chuse for ourselves.

II. This Principle being once firmly settled in our Minds, that God is the sovereign Author and Giver of all Things, it naturally makes Way for that Trust and Dependence upon him, which is the Source of all Virtue. We cannot consider ourselves as under the Government of Providence, without remembering that we are under the Controul of one, who as he cannot but do what is right and fit, so

he will always do whatsoever pleaseth him, whether we like it or whether we like it not. Now this Consideration *worketh Patience*. For how vain a Thing is it to contend, where there is not so much as a Possibility to help ourselves? This does but waste our Strength, and make our Burden the more insupportable ----- But *why should Man contend with his Maker?* Why should he not be better pleased with what God chuses for him, than with what he chuses for himself? The Choice of Man what is it? It is the Choice of a weak imperfect Creature: And Experience shews how easy a Thing it is for us to chuse improperly. But the Choice of God is the Choice of perfect Wisdom, and of perfect Goodness, under the Direction of which it is impossible we should ever fail. It is thus that the Consideration of God's governing Providence teacheth us to reason; which since it is most sensibly felt under Trials, it shews us the Usefulness of them, towards working in our Minds a due Submission to God, in whatever State of Life it shall please him to appoint for us.

III. Nor are the good Effects confined to our own Persons only: They reach to all
who

who stand as Witnesses of the Dealings of Providence towards us, and of our Behaviour in Relation to them. When we see others bravely struggling under heavy Trials, we see what human Nature supported by the Grace of God can do. And though all Men are not alike qualified for great Sufferings; yet such Examples will raise in us that Spirit of Emulation which will carry us so far as we *can* go, and secure us from every Thing which is remarkably mean and contemptible. And as such Examples shew what we *may* do under the Trials of Providence, if we be willing and industrious to do our best; so they will serve as a proper Warning, to keep ourselves in a State of Preparation for them, which will go a great Way towards enabling us to acquit ourselves well, whenever it shall please God to call us to Sufferings.

From these general Hints, we may proceed with some Advantage to the Consideration of the particular Case before us. But here is a Difficulty in the Way that must first be removed. For how (it may be asked) could Abraham believe that God did, or could command him to kill his

own Son ? To this I answer, that Abraham knew it was God that spake to him, because he had the proper Evidence of his Presence. I do not pretend to know in what Way God communicated himself to holy Men in old Times ; but this is certain beyond all Dispute, that God *can*, if he so pleases, communicate himself to any or to all of us, by such Evidences of his Presence, as shall be equal to the Evidence of Sense. And as it *may* be supposed, so it is reasonable to be supposed, that Abraham had some such Evidence ; for otherwise Nature would have been too hard for him ; nor could God have expected to have been obeyed in such a Command as this, had he left Abraham under the least Doubt or Difficulty to know, whether it was he who spake to him or not. You will tell me perhaps, that God *could* not give Abraham any such Command because it was unworthy of him. I own that God can do nothing unworthy of himself ; and therefore, if it could be proved, that this Command was unworthy of God, I would sooner believe that my Bible told me a Fable, than that Abraham had any Evidence of Gods Presence.

But

But how does this appear? If my Father should command me to kill my Son, it would be a Command unworthy of a Father; and should I have sensible Evidence that my Father speaks, I must think him mad. But the Difference of the Authority in each Case alters the Nature of the Action. My Father hath no Authority over the Life of my Son; but God had certainly Authority over the Life of the Son of Abraham. Now if God had Authority over the Life of Isaac, he might take it away by the Hand of Abraham, or by any other Instrument; for the Instrument makes no Difference. To say that Isaac was innocent, and did not deserve to die, is saying nothing. Innocency is a Bar against Man, but it is none against God, by whose Hand the righteous die and perish daily; and yet no Man complains or can complain, *without charging God foolishly.*

A great Difference is to be made between Actions absolutely and *toto genere* unlawful, and those which are so only under certain Circumstances. The Action under Consideration was of the latter Sort. For a Father to kill his Son, is (generally)

a wicked Thing; but it is not so in all Cases. He may do it in the Defence of his own Life; he may do it as a Minister of publick Justice, in Obedience to the Laws of his Country: And he may much more do it at the Command of God. This is not saying that God can contravene or disannul the natural Law: It is only saying, that the same Action which without the Warrant of God's Authority would be a Breach of the natural Law, will not be a Breach of the natural Law, the divine Authority intervening; than which nothing is either more intelligible or more certain.

Thus much I thought it needful to say, to guard against the Cavils of those, who are wont to take a Handle from this Part of sacred Story, to throw Disparagement upon the Word of God. Let us now proceed to what may be of more practical Use, viz. to shew the Wisdom and Goodness of God in this Trial of Abraham. In order to which, we must attend to the general End of Abraham's Calling, which was that he might be a *Father of many Nations*; the Instrument under God of reforming a corrupted and idolatrous

idolatrous World. It was necessary that a Person placed in this Degree of Eminency above the rest of the human Race, should be no less conspicuous for the Integrity of his Obedience ; that it might be an Instruction to the Generations yet to come, that a steadfast Adherence to God under the severest Dispensations of his Providence, would be their best Security. This was a Lesson useful to all, especially to the Sons of Abraham, who in the Decree of God, were fore-ordained to Sufferings, and were to be led to the Possession of the Promises as he was, through Temptations. To support them under these, nothing (I say) could be more proper than the Influence of some great and illustrious Example ; and a greater than this was not to be given, as you will quickly perceive, if you consider it in all its Circumstances. The Command, in its Kind, was of all others the hardest to Flesh and Blood. It was with his own Hands to slay his Son, his only Son, and (which is none of the least endearing Circumstances) the Son of his old Age. The Son of his Hope, even *against Hope* ; and (what is more than all) the Son in whom

God had before declared, that all the Promises made to him and to his Posterity were to be fulfilled. It might seem hard to account how Abraham could reconcile these Promises with the Command to sacrifice his Son. For this I lay down as certain, that God gave him no Intimation beforehand, that he intended to revoke the Command. This would have destroyed the whole Virtue of the Trial. Abraham therefore must be supposed, firmly to have believed that his Son must die; and yet if he had died never to have lived again, the Promises must have failed. The Apostle therefore tells us, that Abraham received the Command to sacrifice his Son, *believing that God was able to raise him up from the dead.* This shews the Perfection of his Faith. Secure that he had the Command of God for what he was doing, he leaves it to Him, to find out the Means of accomplishing his own Promises. Nor was it any Diminution to his Virtue, that he had the comfortable Hope that his Son should one Day be raised from the dead. For we all believe, that our Children and our Friends shall rise again; and yet how do we be-
have

have when by a common Act of his Providence, God takes them away? Not often (I fear) with a Spirit like to that of Abraham when he was called to the much harder Trial of being himself the Executioner of his own Son. There had been nothing strange (nor perhaps blame-worthy) if he who but a little before had taken upon himself to plead with God in Behalf of the Inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, should now have thrown himself at his Maker's Feet, and with Prayers and Tears have begged a Reversion of the Doom denounced against his Son. But his Piety was too warm to suffer Delay; and therefore without the least Hesitation he prepares for the Work. He *rose up early in the Morning and saddled his Ass, and clave the Wood for the Burnt-Offering, and went to the Place of which God had told him.* The Thing is now resolved on and well nigh done. The *Wood is laid in Order; Isaac is bound and laid upon the Altar and upon the Wood; and the Knife taken in Hand to slay him* -----When lo! a new and an unexpected Thing! The fatal Sentence is revoked by the Authority of him that gave it; the
 Son

Son restored again to the Father, as it were from the dead, and a Ram accepted as a Burnt-Offering in his Stead! Behold here the Wisdom and the Goodness of God. Had Abraham actually sacrificed his Son, the Evidence of his Virtue could not have been stronger. For the Thing was already accomplished in the Will and Intention. The external Act alone was wanting. But by revoking the Command at the very Instant of Execution, whilst God received the Proof he desired, he gave to Abraham the most ample Reward of his Obedience; and hath left a standing and a lasting Monument to Mankind, that he is not to be served by such Sacrifices as these. It should seem by this Story, that the Custom in Use among Heathen Nations of sacrificing their Children to their Gods, was not so old as the Days of Abraham; for in Proportion as the Thing had been familiarized by Custom, the Trial would have been a great deal less. But whether there were any such Practice then in Use, or whether there were not, this Instance is a most formal Condemnation of it; for what stronger Evidence could God give that he was not pleased with such

Sacrifices,

Sacrifices, than that when Abraham, even at his own Command, was going to offer him such a Sacrifice, he would not accept it?

I have now made such Observations upon the History, as the subject Matter of it seems most naturally to yield; and shall conclude my Discourse with these few Inferences, *viz.*

1. The Example before us, is a very plain Instruction, that the best of Men are not secure from the severest Trials. Abraham was a great and an excellent Person; and setting this Instance aside, had given Proof of a greater Proficiency in Virtue and Piety, than is commonly to be found among the Sons of Men. But though his Trials had hitherto been great, still, you see, he was reserved for a greater; and if a greater than this could have been given, it is not unlikely that a greater would have been required. There were, indeed, Reasons for this Conduct of Providence, peculiar to Abraham, considering the Use that God intended to make of him. But this I think we may all of us observe, that if we know where Afflictions begin, we can never tell beforehand where

where they will end ; which should teach us to be continually upon our guard, always prepared as in the Day of Battle, lest after having in many Encounters acquitted ourselves well, we should, at last, by some unexpected Onset, suffer a Defeat, and lose the Glory of our former Conquests. The Truth is, that the better Men we are, the more Reason we have, upon some Accounts, to expect to be exercised with Afflictions. For we are the better able to apply them to their proper End, which is the weaning us from this vain World, and the drawing us unto God, the Fountain of pure, unmixed Happiness. This Reasoning always supposes the Belief of a future State ; for good Men might well look for their Reward *here*, if there was nothing to come hereafter. But concerning Abraham, the Apostle assures us, that * *he looked for a better Country, that is a heavenly* ; and this Hope being now more fully assured to us, by the Revelation of Jesus Christ, we can want no better Encouragement to recommend to us that excellent Rule of St. James, † *My Brethren count it all Joy,*

* Heb. xi. 6.

† Jam. i. 2.

*Joy, when ye fall into diverse Temptations ; or that mentioned by the Author to the Hebrews, My Son despise not thou the Chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him ; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth.** The falling into Temptation hath its Difficulties, as almost every Thing else has that is good for any Thing. For while it holds forth to us, *the Fruits of Righteousness* hereafter, if we persevere ; it exposes us to the Hazard of sinking under the Weight of *the present Distress*. But Trials would be no Trials if they were not grievous ; and there would be little Praise in doing well, if there were no Hazard of ill-doing ; nor can we understand how that should be a Means to improve our Virtue, which leaves us no Room for the Exercise of Virtue. The only Thought therefore, which this Consideration should suggest to a wise Man is this, that he should never, in such a Case, rely upon his own Strength ; but receive the Afflictions which God is pleased to lay upon him, with an humble Dependence upon his Grace, under the Influence

of

* Heb. xii. 5, 6.

of which (which will never be wanting to those who diligently seek it) we shall have nothing to charge but our own Sloth and Cowardise, if we miscarry. A good Physician will always apply safe and wholesome Remedies; but it may be in the Power of an untoward Patient to turn them into Poison. And if God gives us the Means whereby we may, if we please, improve and grow better, we are not to complain that he does not lay a Force upon us, and oblige us to make Use of them in Spite of ourselves.

2. We may learn further from this Example, that though God is pleased to exercise good Men with severe Trials, yet he is not wont to do it all at once, but prepares them by Degrees, leading them on from lesser Difficulties to greater, and frequently allaying the Harshness of his Judgments with the Comforts of his Mercy. Abraham's first Trial was, his being called out of *his Country, from his Kindred and from his Father's House, to sojourn in a strange Land.* From this Period had now passed about fifty Years, during which Time, he had been constantly disciplined in the School of Providence

vidence; received many Promises of Favour and Protection from God, which he had seen verified by diverse remarkable Instances of his uncontroulable Power, and Steadfastness in fulfilling his Word. Thus fortified by long Use and Experience, God brings upon him his last and his greatest Trial, which had it come sooner might have overpowered his Mind as yet unable to sustain the Weight of it. It is in the same Way, more or less, that God deals with us all; for Evil is in some Degree or other inseparable from our Natures, and the longer we live the more we experience it. Those little Crosses which we meet with in our Youth, are a Prelude to greater Vexations and Disappointments in our advanced Age. The Cares of private domestick Life are the Forerunners of those more distracting Anxieties that attend upon publick Employments. And thus if we mark the Hand of Providence through every Stage and under every Condition, we shall find one Evil making Way for another, the greater commonly succeeding the less; the Wisdom of God having
so

so ordered it, on Purpose (as it should seem) that we might grow acquainted with Sufferings, and that he might lead us in the most easy and familiar Way to Patience and the Denial of ourselves. And happy for us would it be, would we permit this Goodness of God towards us, to have its true and proper Effect. If we were more disposed to bear the lesser Troubles of Life with Patience, than to have Recourse to bad Arts for the avoiding, or for the Removal of them; yea, if we would sometimes make it our Choice to contradict our Inclinations, and not always study to please ourselves; we should act a wise Part, and should not find ourselves so unequal as we generally are, to great Trials. But if we turn our Backs upon lesser Difficulties, it is no Wonder that we are overwhelmed when great ones overtake us; in which we are left without Excuse, because in not observing a proper Conduct beforehand, we ourselves have lent a helping Hand to our own Undoing. We may learn hence

3. That under the Evils of this present Life (howsoever in Appearance unavoidable) we are not to cast away our Hope in God so long as there is a Possibility of Deliverance left. For what could seem more inevitable than the Death of Isaac? But God had the Remedy in his Hand, which Abraham found at a Time, when he least of all expected it. How did the Heart of the good old Man leap for Joy, when just going to strike the fatal Blow, he heard these Words sounding in his Ears, *Lay not thine Hand upon the Lad, neither do thou any Thing unto him!* Who would not be thus afflicted, that he might be thus comforted! And thus it sometimes has happened in common Life: When Persons, when Families, when whole Nations, have in all Appearance, stood upon the very Brink of Ruin; some sudden Change hath happened, which hath brought on a new Face of Things, and turned their Heaviness into Joy; a Joy so much the more sensibly felt, by how much the less it was foreseen. This should teach us, that in such Cases we

are not to give up ourselves to Despair, nor antedate our Miseries, by foreboding the very worst that may happen; but under all Events, to bear an even and a constant Mind, doing our Duties with an honest Industry, and awaiting our Deliverance from God, if he thinks fit to send it; if not, submitting to his Will with Patience, having an Eye to that *Recompence of Reward*, which remains for us at the Resurrection of the Just.





S E R M O N XVII.



ECCLESIASTES vii. 4.

The Heart of the Wise is in the House of Mourning; but the Heart of Fools is in the House of Mirth.

TO understand the Meaning of these Words we must connect them with the Verses foregoing. *A good Name is better than precious Ointment, and the Day of Death than the Day of ones Birth.* Verse 1. By a good Name the wise Man must be presumed to mean, a good Name built upon the Foundation of real Virtue. An honourable Testimony justly due to true Merit; not the Applause of a Hypocrite stolen by the false Appearances of a mere outside Sanctity. To one so ho-

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noured,

noured, that is to the truly good and virtuous Man, *the Day of Death is better than the Day of his Birth.* In this Passage Solomon most plainly supposes a future State of Happiness for good Men, which he expressly lays down in several Places in this Book of Ecclesiastes. Thus Chap. xii. Verse 14. *God shall bring every Work into Judgment with every secret Thing, whether it be good or whether it be bad.* Prov. xiv. 32. *The Wicked is driven away in his Wickedness, but the Righteous hath Hope in his Death.* This Hope supposed; there will be great Weight in the Expression, *the Day of Death is better than the Day of ones Birth.* For when we are born, we come to our State of Trial; when we die, we go to receive the Reward of our Obedience.

This general Principle laid down he goes on and says; *It is better to go to the House of mourning than to the House of feasting: For that is the End of all Men and the Living will lay it to his Heart.* Verse 2. By the *House of mourning* is meant the House of those who mourn for the Dead. And it is as if he had said, “It is better to go to “a Funeral than to a Feast.” The Reason follows; *for that is the End of all Men.*

What

What is the End of all Men? Why *Death*; which every Example of Mortality will bring to our Remembrance. When we go to the Funeral of our Neighbour or our Friend, and see those about him making Mourn and Lamentation; we can scarce help reflecting that the Time is drawing on when somebody shall mourn and lament for us; and if we are wise we shall *lay it to our Hearts*, that is *so* consider it as to make a proper Use of it in the Conduct of our Lives. To this Purpose it follows, Verse 3. *Sorrow is better than Laughter; for by the Sadness of the Countenance the Heart is made better*; which shews that the proper Fruit of those Reflexions which will arise from such Spectacles of Mortality, is the Reformation of the Heart; and when the Heart is reformed the Amendment of our Manners will follow of Course. The Result of all this is the Observation in the Text. *The Heart of the Wise is in the House of Mourning, but the Heart of Fools is in the House of Mirth*. For if the Consideration of our Mortality and of the great Account we are to render at the Day of Judgment be fruitful of such good Effects, *the Heart of the Wise* will be attentive to

these above all other Things. This it is *to be* in the House of mourning; to live *as if we were* there. To have Death and a future Judgment always uppermost in our Thoughts, and to make it the governing Principle in our Conduct. *But the Heart of Fools is in the House of Mirth!* It is their Business to keep such Thoughts as these, at a Distance; and to drown them in Mirth and Noise, and Laughter; or to lose them in the Hurry and Croud of those vain Amusements, which the Inventions of Men have found out to make them forgetful of themselves.

I need not use many Arguments to convince you of what Importance the serious Consideration of our Mortality is to a sober and a virtuous Life. To what but to the Want of this, are we to refer all the Mischiefs and Disorders that we see in the World? To think on our Mortality, is not merely to think that we must die, but to think of Death with its Consequences as we are Creatures liable to a future Reckoning. If to die meant no more than to cease to be; bad Men, in many Circumstances, might think of Death with as much Satisfaction, as they think of laying themselves
down

down to sleep. But no Man who believes that God will *judge every Work*, can do a bad Thing if he seriously considers what he is doing. But if we never think of Death and Judgment, we may do many bad Things; and we very naturally shall do so. For it is not a loose general Notion of these Things that will influence the Practice; but the considering them and laying them seriously to Heart.

Every Christian as such must be supposed to admit the Certainty of a future State of Rewards and Punishments for good and bad Men. For so we are solemnly instructed. *We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the Things done in his Body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* 2 Cor. v. 10. Yet this notwithstanding we see among Christians great Irregularities of Life. Whence can this arise but from the Want of Reflection and Seriousness? The two great Enemies to Thoughts of this Kind are *Business* and *Pleasure*. The Text particularly cautions us against the latter, as the more dangerous of the two. Business, so far as it is necessary, may well consist with Religion and the Duties of it.

Whilst the Hands are employed for the Sustainance of the Body, the Heart may be attentive to the Wants of the Soul. We may follow our Profession or Calling, and yet find proper Vacations for more interesting Concerns; 'till Avarice lays hold of us; a baneful Weed under whose Shadow no Virtues can grow! But our Pleasures may be so adjusted and contrived as to leave no room for any Thing else. Nor Day nor Night are safe from the Encroachments of this Devourer; which like a swarm of Locusts eats up all, and leaves neither Blade nor Stalk behind it.

Great is the Wisdom of God in the Government of his Creatures; who are all of them furnished with Helps and Instruments suitable to the End for which he intended them. Other Creatures were made for Man: Man alone of all this visible Creation hath God made for himself; to stay here his appointed Time, and then to be made happy with him for ever. Answerable to this End is the Work he hath assigned him, and the Means which he hath vouchsafed him. *Reason*, to find him out, and to know his Will; or, where Reason is short and dim, the Light of his Word, which
very

very plainly shews us our true Happiness and the Way to attain it; and were there no Principles in our Nature that interfered with this End; our Reason would have been a kind of Instinct, and we should have pursued it with the same Steadiness, that we observe in the irrational Creatures, in pursuing every Thing that contributes to their natural Preservation. But as we have Appetite in common with the Brutes; and our Reason qualifies us to be affected with the *present* Good in more Ways than they can be; hence arises that Contradiction in Conduct which is peculiar to ourselves; our Passions carrying us, for the Sake of the present apparent Good, to many Ways of acting, which Reason shews us to be inconsistent with our best, that is, our future Interest. There is nothing that can cure this Infirmary of Mind, but diligent Attention to the Things of another World; and observe what Methods God hath taken to bring us to it. One Generation passes away, and another cometh. This is a natural Admonition of our Mortality, which every reasonable Man may improve to Advantage. But for those whom God hath placed under the Light of Revelation, he
hath

hath made a more ample Provision; his *Word* in which we are to read and meditate; his *Ordinances* which we are constantly to observe; all of them Instruments serving to call off our Minds from this World, and to place them upon the Hopes of a better.

Those who consider the Spirit of the Gospel, will hardly think they behave themselves like Christians unless they daily come to God by Prayer. And is there a Prayer that a Christian can make use of, that will not lead him to Reflections upon another Life? When a Man asks of God to forgive him his Sins, does he not in Effect ask that he *may not be condemned with the Wicked*? When he prays to be delivered from Evil, and that God would give him his Grace to assist him in well doing; is not this said with a View to his *Recompence at the Resurrection of the Just*? Every religious Act must in the Nature of it, have reference to the next World, because Religion in general has next World for its Object; and when Men are constant and regular in these Things, it will naturally beget a Habit of Seriousness, and that Firmness of Resolution, that no Temptation will find them

unprepared. If this is the Case (and Reason and Experience shews it so to be) we are to look for a very different Effect, when such Exercises fall under Neglect or Contempt, and are succeeded by an unsatiable Itch after Diversions and Recreations. Much Gaiety of Mind, and a serious devout Temper will not stand together. A good Man may allow himself in Pastimes with Reserve and Moderation. But the Habit of them naturally drives out all Seriousness of Thought, and leaves the Mind open to the worst Kind of Influences.

This *Habit* is so much the more cautiously to be guarded against, as it is wont to grow upon us whilst we think we are very innocently employed. When Actions are in themselves criminal, they raise Abhorrence in every Mind that is not quite lost to Virtue. But when for the *Matter* of it, a Thing is allowable, and grows faulty only by the *Excess*, we are hurt sometimes before we are sensible of it. This should teach us to keep our Distance: Rather to be too severe than too remiss. It is more easy to avoid the first Occasion than the second or a third, when Indulgence has warmed the Appetite and made it more eager.

eager. There is no such Thing as laying down any precise Measure in such Cases; and yet there are certain Symptoms by which every one who will carefully observe himself, may easily judge when he is going too far.

The Abuse of any Thing is best understood by its true natural Use. The Use of Recreations is to relieve Nature when it grows to be too much oppressed and borne down by the severe Exercises of Life. There is a certain Disengagement; a certain easiness and cheerfulness of Temper, which is as necessary to the well-being of the Mind as a proper Disposition of the corporeal Instruments, is to the Health and Strength of the Body. When the Mind is distracted with Care, or the Spirits clouded over with Melancholly; a Man is fit for nothing. He can serve neither God, nor his Neighbour, nor himself as he ought to do. In this Case, Recreations come in as a seasonable Refreshment; and when they are properly interposed, they will help us to spend the rest of our Time with better Effect. We may meditate more attentively, and pray more earnestly and affectionately; we may follow the Business of our Callings

Callings with more Spirit and Alacrity; and so far as Recreations serve to these, and such like good Purposes, they do well. But when they so engross our Thoughts, that we cannot find Time to go to Church, or to enter into our Closet; when we feel our Sense of heavenly Things beginning to abate, and we grow every Day more cold and indifferent to what is serious and profitable; we may as certainly conclude that we are running into Excess, as a Man is sure that he drinks too much when he finds himself disordered in his Understanding. This is a Kind of Sottishness in Pleasure, not less mischievous in its Consequences than Drunkenness. For when the Mind is in so careless, and unguarded a Posture as this, it lies open and exposed to every Temptation; and Temptations are seldom wanting in such Company as are ordinarily to be met with in the *Houses of Mirth*. The same wise Man hath told us, that the *Companion of Fools shall be destroyed*, Prov. xiii. 20. And if *the Heart of Fools be in the House of Mirth*; we must have Fools for our Companions: And what can we learn from Fools, but Folly? Business has its fixed Limits; our Recreations

ations seldom have. Innocent Mirth may be the Thing intended ; but when Men's Hearts grow warm it may degenerate into something criminal. Wit may grow profane ; good Humour and Complaisance, may turn to some unruly Passion ; and when Occasions of this Sort are often repeated, our Virtue will be in the utmost Danger. Recreations, if not vicious in themselves, have frequently a near Affinity or Alliance with Vice, and may be made a Handle to the worst of Actions. Some lead to Intemperance ; others provoke to Incontinency ; all are attended with unnecessary Expences which often run to great Extravagancy. There ought, therefore, to be great Caution and Discretion in the Use of these Things. There is no venturing out far, without Peril. The smooth Stream falls into a troubled Sea, where Thousands have made Shipwreck ; and perhaps more Virtue has been lost by this sly insinuating Mischief, than by direct Attacks, against which, being forwarned, we are commonly more guarded.

No reasonable Man will dispute the Truth of these general Principles. But our

our Passions deceive us. We treat these Matters as *discretionary* Things, and so they are in this Sense, that the Law does not (as indeed it could not) draw the exact Line beyond which we are not to go. But let us not fancy that because the Law leaves these Things to our Discretion, therefore it leaves us absolutely to our own Wills; and that Reason and Conscience have nothing to do with them: For we are as much accountable to God for the Use of our Discretion as we are for the Use of any other Gift. And what will Conscience say when it shall appear that you have been at play when you should have been at work, or at your Devotion, or in some reasonable Way providing for the Use of your Family? I cannot tell you when you are to work, or when you are to play, or when you are to do any Thing else, in which your own Discretion merely is concerned; I cannot tell you how much you may lose at Cards or Dice, or any other Diversion, consistently with your Circumstances, and with the Dues you owe to your Families, or the rest of Mankind: But God who searcheth the Heart knows all these Things, and sees when you are more influenced by the Love
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of Pleasure than by Considerations of Reason and Conscience; and for this he will call you to an Account at the Day of Judgment.

For this Reason (and for others already mentioned) it were much to be wished, that these Things which so much *trouble* the World, were *even cut off* from among us; and that these Instruments of Folly and Mischief were banished out of all sober Families. Our Fathers lived without them, and so may their Sons and Daughters if they please. I will not go so far as to say that every Thing ought to be rejected which may be abused; but this I take upon me to affirm, that in the Case of Practices warranted by no necessary End; where the Abuse is easy, obvious, and common; where the precise Boundaries between Right and Wrong grow to be confused and difficult to be distinguished; it is the Duty of, or at least will best become, every good Christian to forbear; lest he himself falls into a Snare or leads others into it by his Example. I could shew this from Scripture, if I thought it proper at this Time.---But not to trouble you with nice Disputes upon Points of Casuistry, I will speak to your own plain Sense;

Sense; and let us go back to the Point from which we at first set out; that Death is the End of all Men. How soon it may come, the youngest of us cannot tell --- But suppose it now even at the Door, and that the Day or (as it may happen) the very Hour that separates you from your Diversions, should bring you into another World: Do you think you should be in a fit Posture of Mind to appear before your great Judge? I do not recommend the Severity of *Recluses*. Let People follow their Callings, and take their Recreations too when they are fit and seasonable; but let not their Hearts be there. There should be such Rests, both from Business and Pleasure, as is necessary to enable us to gain a quick, lively and affecting Sense of heavenly Things; to *tune* the Soul (as it were) up to a Pitch, somewhat corresponding to the State it will be in when it shall be severed from the Body; which will be a Kind of Foretaste of Heaven whilst we are here on Earth. Such a Sense the Psalmist well described, when he broke out in these warm Expressions, --- *As the Hart panteth after the Water-brooks, so longeth my Soul after thee O God! My Soul is athirst for God, even for the living God:*

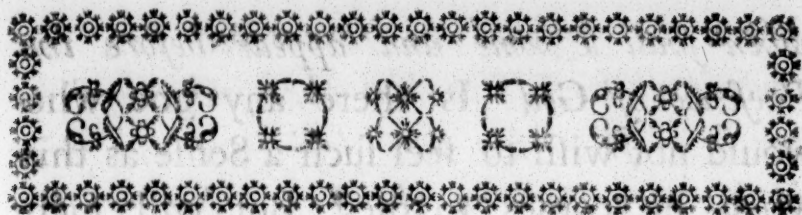
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when shall I come and appear before the Presence of God! Is there any one who would not wish to feel such a Sense as this when he comes to die! But will such Thoughts as these meet us at Play-houses, Card-tables, or in Dancing-rooms? What is a Life that has been one continual Round of Pleasure? If it is barely innocent, comfortable to us, whether living or dying, it cannot be. It is (at best) one entire Void, that cannot present to us a single Object, that it will be any Comfort to us to look back upon. I am afraid that there are none of us of such purged Minds, as not to want Assistance to fit us for that Life, where every Thing that is sensual will be at an End: And I make no Doubt but that when we have done our best, God will supply what is wanting to make our State compleat. But I see no Reason to believe that God will do *all* for us when we have done *nothing* for ourselves.

I shall press this Matter no farther, but leave it upon your own Consciences; and I pray God so to direct your Hearts, *that ye may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good Work, and increasing in the Knowledge of God.* Col. i. 10.

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S E R M O N XVIII.



I PET. ii. 21.

-----*Leaving us an Example that ye should follow his Steps.*

HE Context stands thus. *This is thankworthy, if a Man for Conscience toward God, endure Grief, suffering wrongfully. For what Glory is it if when ye be buffeted for your Faults ye shall take it patiently? But if when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an Example that ye should follow his Steps; who did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth. Who when he was reviled, reviled not again:*

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When he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. Who his own self bare our Sins in his own Body on the Tree, that we being dead to Sin should live unto Righteousness, by whose Stripes ye were healed.

These Words are an Enforcement of the Doctrine above laid down, viz. That Christ by his Death and Sufferings made an Attonement or Propitiation for the Sins of the World; and shew us likewise the general Use we are to make of it, which is, to set this great and wonderful Transaction before us as a Pattern for our Imitation; that (as St. Paul speaks) *being planted together in the Likeness of his Death; we may be also in the Likeness of his Resurrection.* Rom vi. 5. But because this may, at first Sight, seem to be a Mark too high for human Strength to aim at, it will be necessary that something be offered by Way of Explanation.

The Example of Christ is the Example of one in all Respects perfect: So it is in the Text: *He did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth.* Both in Deed and in Word, he was absolutely irreprehensible. But in this Respect Christ nei-
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ther is, nor can be our Example; for to call us to Perfection, will not stand with calling us to Salvation by Repentance. Nor, if you attend to it, is the sinless Perfection of Christ here set forth as the Example *itself*, but as a Circumstance proper to establish the Character of Christ, so as to make it an Example in other Respects in which his Behaviour is certainly imitable by us. The Instruction the Apostle begins with is, that we *suffer Wrong patiently, for Conscience towards God*. To enforce this Lesson, he says that *Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an Example that we should follow his Steps*. By the Nature of the Argument it appears, that the Example of Christ ought to be the Example of one *suffering wrongfully*; and this the Text intimates by saying that he suffered *for us*; which is, in effect, to say, that he suffered not *for himself*, or for his own Sins. But to make it more plain, the Apostle presently adds, that he had no Sins of his own to suffer for; *who did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth*. The Perfection of Christ therefore was not mentioned to shew that we are to be perfect as Christ was perfect; but to shew

that Christ suffered wrongfully, and that therefore we should be contented to suffer wrongfully. In the one Part of his Character we cannot imitate him; in the other we may. In other Words, we may imitate his Virtues in Kind, not in the Degree and Measure of them.

When the Apostle had said that Christ did not suffer for himself, or for his own Sins, he explains in the following Verses, in what Sense he suffered for us. *Who his own Self bare our Sins in his own Body on the Tree, that we being dead to Sin, should live unto Righteousness, by whose Stripes ye were healed; for ye were as Sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your Souls.* There is in this Passage a plain Reference to the Scape Goat under the Law, an Account of which you have in the xvith Chapter of Leviticus. On the great Day of Expiation, when the High Priest was to make an Attonement for the Sins of all the People, he was ordered to take *two Goats and present them before the Lord.* One of them was to be killed, the other to be kept alive, and let loose into the Wilderness. But before he was to be let loose, it is said,

said, *Aaron shall lay both his Hands upon the Head of the live Goat, and confess over him all the Iniquities of the Children of Israel, and all their Transgressions in all their Sins, putting them upon the Head of the Goat-----and the Goat shall bear upon him all their Iniquities unto a Land not inhabited.* (Vers. 21, 22.) That is, the Sins of the People should hereby be done away, or the Punishment due to them forgiven. This Rite was a Symbol or Representation of what was to be done in a more eminent Manner under the Gospel. For as the Sins of the People of Israel were *put* (as it were) upon the Head of the Goat, who bore them away into the Wilderness; so the Apostle here tells us, *Christ bare our Sins in his own Body on the Tree* (or, as the Words may be rendered, *to the Tree*) where they were lost in his Sufferings, never to be remembered more.

This then most evidently shews that the End of Christ's Suffering was not merely to be to us an Example of Patience and Fortitude as some have vainly imagined. The first and principal End of his Suffering was to procure to us the

Remission of our Sins, and eternal Redemption. But by this Act he became an Example to us, and that not only of Patience in bearing Wrong, but of the most perfect Submission to the Will of God, and the most extensive Love to Mankind. These are rather suggested by the Apostle than expressed; but they ought not to be omitted, for they are the greatest and most shining Parts of his Character.

The Patience of our Saviour in bearing Wrong, is described by the Prophet Isaiah in very strong and lively Colours. *I gave my Back to the Smilers, and my Cheeks to them that plucked off the Hair; I hid not my Face from Shame and Spitting.* Isa. l. 6. Look into his History, and you will find this literally accomplished. They *mocked* him, they *smote* him, they *buffeted* him, they *spit in his Face*, they *scourged* him, they *put a Crown of Thorns on his Head*, they *crucified* him; in all which, *as a Sheep before his Shearers is dumb*, so he *opened not his Mouth*, but in Prayers for his Persecutors. That Meekness which he thus practised himself, he gave in Charge to his Disciples. Matt. v. 39. *I say unto you, that ye resist not Evil; but*
whosoever

whoſoever ſhall ſmite thee on thy right Cheek, turn to him the other alſo; and if any Man will ſue thee at the Law, and take away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloak alſo. I eaſily perſuade myſelf that there was ſomething in this Precept, peculiar * to the State of the firſt Chriſtians: But proper Allowance made for the Difference of Times and Seaſons, it was no Doubt intended to be a Leſſon to all. It may not abſolutely and in all Inſtances be unbecoming a Chriſtian to repel Force by Force; but the Occaſions which will juſtify ſuch a Conduct, I apprehend are by far leſs frequent than they are commonly thought to be. Moſt Chriſtians, it may be, will think that all is right in ſuch Caſes, if they keep within the Bounds of ſtrict natural Juſtice; but how is this paying a Reſpect to the Example of Chriſt? If he had carried his Morals no higher, we might with great Propriety have ſtopped there too. But did he do ſo? No, his Cauſe was juſt; he had done no Evil; nor wanted he Power to have aſſerted his Innocency, if he had thought ſo proper. *Thinkeſt thou (ſays he to Peter) that I cannot pray to my Father, and he ſhall preſently*

* See Boyle's Lecture, p. 171---177.

presently give me more than twelve Legions of Angels? He receded therefore from his Right, that he might carry on the Work of his heavenly Father; and so should we, whenever our insisting upon it will shew, a restless, impatient, worldly Spirit, which in all Cases, is a great Disgrace to our Profession; and in Truth also to the Character of a good moral Man. For there is such a Thing as natural Moderation*, as well as natural Justice. If we cared for nothing but this World, we could not shew it more effectually, than by disputing every Inch of it. But we should remember, that as Christians we are called to the Hopes of a better, and therefore should shew great Temper in these Things, and be more ready to put up Wrongs than to give Offence, by the too eager Pursuit of Justice.

But the greatest and the most shining Part of our Saviour's Character (upon which all the rest was founded) is yet to come; his entire Submission to the Will of God; and his extensive Love to Mankind. His

Submission

* "As it is a Duty says (Cicero) to be generous in giving; so it is not to be too rigorous in demanding; but
 "---to let go something of our strict and just Rights upon
 "certain Occasions: To avoid all Suits and Contentions at
 "Law, as far as can reasonably be expected, and perhaps
 "SOMETHING FARTHER. *De Offic. Lib. ii. Chap. 18.*

Submission to the Will of God, does indeed, in good Part, appear from his Patience in suffering; for therefore did he endure, because it was the Will of his Heavenly Father. But take the whole Work of our Redemption from the Beginning to the Conclusion of it. Consider what he was, and what he condescended to become for our Sakes, and it will give us large Ideas of it. We see many Examples of patient Suffering among the Sons of Men not greatly inferior to his; but we see no Love, no Submission, equal to His, in all the several Parts of it.

At the xviith Chapter of St. John, Verse 5. Christ speaks of a *Glory which he had with the Father before the World was*. And the same Evangelist tells us, that he *was with God, and was God*, and that *all Things were made by him*, John i. 1, 2, 3. Christ farther says of himself, *I and my Father are one*. John x. 30. *I am in the Father, and the Father in me*, John xiv 10. Which Passages import that the Father and the Son, though personally distinct, yet in the Substance of the Godhead are but ONE. Yet great as he was in Honour and Glory with the Father, he *made himself* (as the Apostle speaks) *of no Reputation*

Reputation for our Sakes. He was made in the Likeness of Men; and being found in Fashion as a Man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross. Philip. ii. 7, 8. This is a great and matchless Example. Are we then to follow it? Yes, no Doubt, for we are exhorted so to do. But how? The same Apostle tells us. *Let this MIND be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.* This comes to what I said just now. We cannot follow Christ's Example in the Greatness, but in the Kind and Manner of it. We cannot do as Christ did, because we are not equal to him in Power and Excellency. But we may do something correspondent to it. We may follow him in a Measure suitable to that infinite Distance there is between us and him; and to the Work whereunto it hath pleased God to call us. Let us consider a little more distinctly both Parts of Christ's Example, and we shall quickly perceive, in what Sort we must behave, if we would shew ourselves like minded unto him. And

I. As to his Submission to the Will of God; we may observe that when once in Obedience to it, he had undertaken the Work of our Redemption, he suffered
nothing

nothing to divert him from his Purpose. He became Man; and as a Man he had all the Feelings of the human Nature. He was hungry, he was thirsty; he felt Pain of Body and Anguish of Mind. For so we read Luke xxii. 44. where it is said that *being in an Agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his Sweat was as it were great Drops of Blood falling to the Ground.* St. Matthew and St. Mark both of them report him as complaining that *his Soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto Death.* Matt. xxvi. 38. Mark xiii. 34; which shews that the Godhead did not exempt the Manhood from the natural Affections of Humanity. And this is the Foundation of the Apostle's Reasoning. Heb. ii. 17, 18. *Wherefore in all Things, it behoved him to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest--for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.*

Under this Sameness of Nature with ourselves, how did he behave as to the Things of this World? Why with an utter Contempt of them when they stood in Opposition to his finishing the Work which the Father had appointed him

to do. No Doubt the mere Power considered, he who was Lord of all the Earth, might have chosen in what Rank he would appear. He might have come cloathed with Majesty and Terror; he might have put on the Pomp of an earthly Prince; and as he was in himself greater than Solomon, he might have appeared greater than he in outward Magnificence and Splendor. But he chose to become a poor Man; mean in his Birth, mean in his future Circumstances, and by this obnoxious to Reproach and Contempt, to Malice, Rudeness and Insolence, and at last, to die like a Thief or a Murderer. What now are we to learn from hence? Not that it is a Crime in any Christian to be rich or great, but that it is a Crime to be so, otherwise than according to the Appointment of Providence. If God had so appointed, Christ might have been rich and great without a Fault; but this did not suit with those Measures by which he in his Wisdom had determined to bring about the Redemption of Mankind, and therefore Christ became poor. The Example then lies not simply in being poor, but in being poor for God's Sake.

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It is the same Thing as to Afflictions of every Kind. Christ might have lived at Ease and have died in Peace, without any Diminution of his Character, if it had stood with the Methods of God's Providence that it should have been so. But because it seemed not meet to the divine Wisdom to save Mankind otherwise than by the Sufferings and Death of Christ, therefore it behoved Christ to suffer. Here lies the Example, and here Christ himself has placed it. Luke xxiv. 46. *Thus it is written, and thus it BEHOVED Christ to suffer.* Why did it *behave* Christ to suffer? Why because it was *so written*. And why was it so written, but because it was so ordained? So again, Matt. xxvi. 53. when the Jews came to apprehend Christ, in order to carry him before Pilate, and one of his Disciples drew his Sword to rescue him; he stopped him with saying, *How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?* If their Swords could not have saved him, he had Ministers enough at his Command that could. But God had ordained that he should suffer; therefore it behoved him to suffer, and therefore it was vain for them to resist.

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The whole comes to this ; that in what Condition soever the Providence of God thinks fit to place us ; we must do his Work with an honest and a steady Mind. If Troubles and Afflictions be our Lot ; we must bear them with Patience. If he blesses us with Ease and Affluence of all Things ; we must *receive them with Thanksgiving*. 1 Tim. iv. 3, 4. Popish Superstition, perhaps, will teach you something else. There are some in that Communion that will not be rich, or at least, pretend that they will not. There are others, who, if God sends them not Afflictions, will make Afflictions by voluntary Severities exercised upon themselves. Ask them the Reason of this, and they will plead Christ's Example. Christ was poor, and Christ suffered, and we are to follow his Example. Christ was poor and Christ did suffer ; it is true. But it was because he was thereunto called. You must therefore first prove your Call, before you can plead the Example ; for it will not follow, that because it was great and glorious in Christ to suffer, when he was thereto called ; therefore it will be Virtue in you to suffer when you are not called.

called. Let us attend to what the Apostle himself says in this very Case. *This is thank-worthy, if a Man for Conscience towards God endure Grief----* You see here, that the Praise lies not merely in enduring Grief, but in enduring it *for Conscience towards God*. A Man may suffer for his Sins and his Follies, in which there is certainly no Merit, as the Apostle subjoins; *What Glory is it if when ye be buffeted for your Faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.* This was Christ's Case. He endured Grief in Obedience to the Will of the Father, that is, for Conscience towards God. This was the Case of all the Apostles, who suffered Persecution in Defence of the Gospel, which they had it in Commission to publish to Mankind. And this will be the Case of every Christian, who chuses to forego the Riches, the Honours, the Pleasures, the Peace, nay even the Use of this World, when they will not stand with a good Conscience; that is, when Circumstances so fall out, that we must either forego them, or transgress the Law of God as written in our Hearts,

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or laid down to us in his holy Word. This is properly a CALL to Suffering, and in such Cases, the Example of Christ is our Pattern. But if we can enjoy the Comforts of this Life, and keep a good Conscience too, I see not what there is in the Example of Christ that should hinder us. For ordinarily, we know not the Will of God otherwise than by his general Law; and therefore, all extraordinary Manifestations excepted out of the Case, those whom God's general Law calleth not to Suffering, are not called.

St. Paul 1 Cor. ix. 27. says, *I keep under my Body, and bring it into Subjection, lest that by any Means when I have preached unto others, I myself should be a Castaway.* What does he mean by this? The foregoing Verse will shew you. *Every Man that striveth for the Mastery is temperate in all Things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible Crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore---keep under my Body, &c.* The Allusion here is to the Custom of the ancient Wrestlers, who used to prepare themselves by a strict Diet, and carefully abstain from all Things that might render them less qualified for the Combat. And

St.

St. Paul tells us, that he used the same Method to obtain the heavenly Crown, that they did to obtain an earthly. Abstinence and Self-denial, no Doubt, come under the Notion of Suffering; and when Men therefore abstain, that by subduing Appetite, they may be the better qualified to fulfill the Law of God (which was St. Paul's Case) it is still suffering *for Conscience towards God*. To subdue Appetite is our proper Work; and the Law which shews the End will justify the Means, so far as in the Nature of them they are useful and fit. But it is one Thing to withdraw Fuel from our Lusts; another to exercise Acts of Revenge upon ourselves by Way of Compensation for Sin. The first is commendable; the other an Affront to God, who alone hath Right as well to punish as to forgive; and a Reproach to the Gospel, which knows of no other Compensation for Sin, than the Blood of Jesus Christ once offered up for us all.

II. Let us now proceed to the other Part of our Saviour's Character; his extensive Love to Mankind. This went so far as the laying down his Life for them; which was carrying it to the very utmost Stretch,

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as he himself hath said. John xv. 13. *Greater Love hath no Man than this, that a Man lay down his Life for his Friend.* For certain the Practice of the World considered, it is a very extraordinary and uncommon Case, as St. Paul observes, Rom. v. 7. *Scarcely for a righteous (or just) Man will one die; yet peradventure, for a good (or beneficent) Man, some would even dare to die.* But the Love of Christ was greater even than this; for he died not only for his Friends, but for those, who were Enemies to God (that is to *himself*) as the Apostle presently subjoins. *When we were Enemies we were reconciled to God by the Death of his Son; for while we were yet Sinners, Christ died for us,* Vers. 10. 8. We were Enemies by our wicked Works. But Christ treated us all as Friends, and died for us all. What say we now? Are we to follow his Example in this? So St. John expressly tells us. 1 John iii. 16. *Hereby perceive we the Love of God, because he laid down his Life for us: And we ought to lay down our Lives for the Brethren.* But this must be understood with the same Restriction that has been mentioned in the foregoing Cases, provided God calls us there-

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to : Otherwise we shall introduce a wild Kind of Heroism into Christianity. When the Apostle says we ; he seems to speak in the Character of an Apostle ; for this was eminently their Case. They were called to preach the Gospel at the Peril of their Lives, and this was *laying down their Lives for the Brethren*. And this is the Case of all Ministers of the Gospel now. Whatever Dangers may threaten they must be true to their Trust. They must dispense the Word of God faithfully ; for they are hereunto called. It is the same Thing as to Christians in common, when the general Interests of Religion, or particular Duty calls them to Suffering.---But there is a Kind of Beneficence much inferior to this, which the Example of Christ does very strongly enforce ; and that is doing Good to others, out of the Abundance that God hath given us. To this we are likewise called ; called, I say, not only by the plain, express Precepts of the Law, but by the common Feelings of human Nature. Here then again Christ is our Pattern ; and it may very strongly be argued, that if Christ in Obedience to the Father, laid

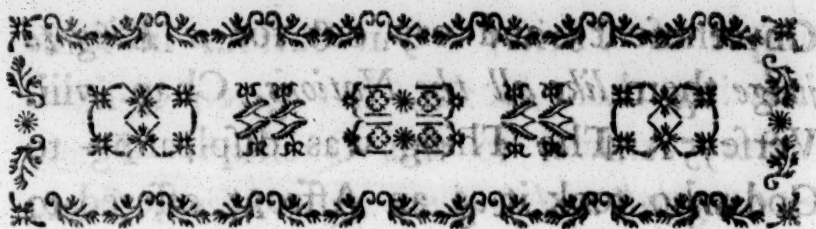
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down his Life for us, much more should we be ready to communicate to one another what is far less precious to us than Life. So the Apostle reasons in the next Verse. *Whoso hath this World's Good, and seeth his Brother have Need, and shutteth up his Bowels of Compassion from him, how dwelleth the Love of God in him?* It is a Deduction from what he had advanced before, that because Christ laid down his Life for us, therefore we ought to lay down our Lives for the Brethren; and it is as if he had said, "If we are obliged to do thus much, what shall we think of those who refuse to do a great deal less?"

What shall we think of them indeed! of those who eat and are full! of those who hoard up in Coffers, or who put out to Usury! of those who sport in the Sunshine like Butterflies, and know not what it is to deny themselves any one Gratification of Life, and yet cannot find a Heart to relieve a poor Man in Distress! have no Compassion for the Hungry or the Naked! for the Fatherless and the Widow! Are these Followers of the Ex-
ample

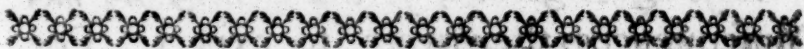
ample of Christ. Our Saviour in fore-
 shewing their Doom, has given a satis-
 factory Answer to this Question. *I was*
an hungred, and ye gave me no Meat; I was
thirsty and ye gave me no Drink; I was a
Stranger, and ye took me not in; naked and
ye cloathed me not; sick and in Prison, and
ye visited me not.----*Verily I say unto you,*
inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least
of these my Brethren, ye did it not unto me.
 Matt. xxv. 42---46.





S E R M O N XIX.

A RESTORATION SERMON.



I SAM. xii. 23, 24.

-----*But I will teach you the good and the right Way;*

Only fear the Lord and serve him in Truth with all your Heart; for consider how great Things he hath done for you.

THESE Words are the Close of
T Samuel's Instructions to the People
of Israel, after he had anointed
Saul to be their King. This Nation had
been for a long Time under God's im-
mediate Government, who by his Prophets
gave them Directions in all their civil Af-
fairs. But vain, and foolish, and given to
change, they grow weary of this Sort of
Govern-

Government; and cry out for a King to judge them like all the Nations. Chap. viii.

Verse 5. The Thing was displeasing to God who took it as an Affront offered to himself. *They have not* (says he, to Samuel) *rejected THEE, but they have rejected ME, that I should not reign over them,* Verse

7. As a Punishment for this great Offence, he grants them their Hearts wish, but not without giving them full Warning of the Consequences they were to expect: For thus he directs the Prophet. *Hearken unto*

their Voice; bowbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the Manner of the King that shall reign over them. Verse 9. The

Prophet obeys; and thus he speaks: *This will be the Manner of the King that shall reign over you; he will take your Sons and appoint them for himself, for his Chariots, and to be his Horsemen, and some shall run before his Chariots; and he will appoint him Captains over Thousands, and Captains over Fifties, and will set them to ear his Ground, and to reap his Harvest, and to make his Instruments of War, and Instruments of his Chariots; and he will take your Daughters to be Confectionaries, and to be Cooks, and to be Bakers.* After enumerating these and many

many other Marks of Slavery, (which occur from Verse 11. to Verse 18.) he tells them in Effect that they would at last dearly repent them of the Change; *Ye shall cry out because of your King which ye shall have chosen you, and the Lord will not hear you in that Day.* It is to be presumed, that had the People been so wise as to have profited by this Admonition, and changed their Purpose; God would still have continued to be their King as heretofore. But deaf to all reproof, and fearless of what was to come, they persist in their Demands and say, *Nay; but we will have a King over us, that we also may be like all the Nations, and that our King may judge us, and fight our Battles.* Verse 19, 20. The Thing is done: Saul is anointed. And what says God to them afterwards? Why he leaves them not without Hope, but tells them that though they had done foolishly, he would yet be merciful, if they forfeited not his Blessing by their Disobedience. *Fear not* (says the Prophet) *ye have done all this Wickedness, yet turn not aside from following the Lord with all your Heart.* And to shew the Strefs of this Advice, and that it might sink the deeper into their Hearts, it is presently repeated

peated in the Words of the Text, *only fear the Lord and serve him in Truth with all your Heart.* Had he said no more than this, "As you hope to prosper hereafter, so be ye obedient to the Lord your God," he had said enough. But he draws them with a double Cord; not only forewarning them of what they were hereafter to expect, but (which is sometimes apt to work more upon ingenuous Minds) calling them back to the remembrance of the gracious Goodness of God which they had already experienced --- *consider how great Things he hath done for you.* What were these great Things? Why his chusing them out from among all the Nations of the Earth to be a People peculiar to himself. His leading them forth out of Egypt by the Hand of Moses and Aaron, and protecting them ever since by the constant Exercise of his miraculous Providence; for thus the Prophet addresses himself unto them but a few Verses before. *It is the Lord that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your Fathers up out of the Land of Egypt; now therefore stand still that I may reason with you before the Lord, of all the righteous Acts of the Lord, which he did to you and your Fathers.* Verse 6, 7. From what God had thus done

done for them he encourages them to take good Hope of what he would still do for them, provided the Favours they had received wrought in them their proper Effect, a thankful and obedient Mind. *The Lord will not forsake his People for his great Name-sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you his People --- ONLY fear the Lord and serve him, &c.*

The general Doctrine I shall raise from the Text is, That a proper Use of national Deliverances, is the true and only Foundation for reasonable Hopes of national Blessings; and that this Use centers in national Virtue. A Subject very proper for our present Consideration. The Day calls to our Remembrance a very remarkable Act of God's Providence towards these Nations, which I cannot more properly express than in the Words of the Office of our Church, in which we thank God for

“ delivering us from the unnatural Rebel-
 “ lion, Usurpation, and Tyranny of un-
 “ godly, and cruel Men, and from the sad
 “ Confusions and Ruin thereupon ensuing;
 “ and restoring to his own just and un-
 “ doubted Rights our then most gracious
 “ Sovereign Lord King Charles the Second;
 “ and

“ and to us the publick and free Profession
 “ of God’s true Religion and Worship,
 “ together with our former Peace and
 “ Prosperity.” The History of those Times
 is so well known that I apprehend I should
 not very usefully employ your Attention in
 retailing to you the Particulars of it. It
 will better become my Function to put you
 in mind what wise Use may be made of
 those Miseries which our Forefathers suf-
 fered; and by what Sort of Conduct we
 may best give Proof of that thankfulness
 to God for this great Deliverance of which
 we have been making solemn Profession.
 The Benefits which we acknowledge, are of
 two Kinds, *civil* and *religious*. I shall
 proceed with a distinct Regard to each.

And first; the civil Benefit is, our De-
 liverance from *Usurpation* and *Tyranny*; the
 one, the natural Offspring of the other.
 Every Usurper is a Tyrant of Course; for
 he that invades Right declares against
 Right; and this is Tyranny against the Per-
 son wronged. And when Tyranny begins
 it seldom ends in one or in a few. If the
 Wrong is national (as it must ever be in
 Usurpations upon sovereign Authority) the
 Consequences of it will be national too.

Evils

Evils of this Sort produce the worst Kinds of Disorders in Government, as they are the Struggles of Men pushed on by the strongest of Passions; love of Power on the one Hand and tenderness for Liberty and Property on the other. Power is the Idol of ambitious Minds; Liberty, the natural Desire of every human Creature. Government consists in the due Mixture of both; and where the internal Structure and Constitution of a Commonwealth is such, that Authority bears not hard upon Liberty, nor Liberty upon Authority; *there* the most perfect State of Society subsists. On the contrary, whenever Government loses its End or is totally destroyed, it is by the Prevalency of one of these two Principles; if of Authority upon Liberty, it degenerates into Tyranny; if of Liberty upon Authority it runs into Confusion.

To explain this farther it is to be observed, that the Liberty fit for Men, is not, *cannot* be, a Liberty for every Man to do as he pleases. It is not a Liberty to murder, to steal, or to debauch. This is a Liberty destructive of human Happiness, for which Society is understood to provide. But it is such a Liberty as will consist with
Reason

Reason and Virtue. Authority stands as a Check upon Passion; it never ought to be a Bar against Reason. Whenever it is so, it deviates from its true Use, and grows to be a Burden upon Mankind, more or less heavy the nearer it approaches or the farther it goes from its natural Center.

As there is no Stability or Perfection in human Things, it can hardly be, but there will be Encroachments, either of Authority upon Liberty, or of Liberty upon Authority, as Circumstances happen to cast the Scale on this Side or on the other. The first Beginnings of civil Disorders are generally on the Side of Authority: For each Principle naturally affecting to enlarge its Bounds; Power, which is under the Direction of one or a few, more easily moves than Liberty, which, being divided among many, requires the Help of united Counsels. But Power should ever dread to encroach upon Liberty; least it raises a Spirit against itself which it cannot lay. A wise Prince, may compose the first Beginnings of civil Commotions: But a mad People who can restrain? Let those dreadful Times, which are the Subject of our present Reflexions, bear witness to this Truth. From
what

what small Beginnings did the Difference between the King and Parliament arise! Grievances were complained of; and it is not to be denied but Grievances there were. But they were Grievances which might have been redressed; Grievances which actually were redressed, yea and more than redressed, if the Nation had had Hearts to have known where to stop, and with what to have been content. But when by the wrong Measures of some, and the evil Artifices of others, the Tumour of Discontent was blown up to its full Magnitude, nothing could assuage it. Large, and even mean, Concessions on the Part of the Crown, only served to prepare the Way for yet larger Demands on the Side of the People; till each Side growing resolute and and desperate, the Quarel ended in a Tragedy, blacker than which was never seen or heard of in any Nation! From the miserable Consequences of this wicked Deed, under which the goodly Fabrick of our Constitution lay for several Years as a Heap of Ruins, God restored us by the Mercy of this Day; and what human Foresight could not hope, *that* did his over-ruling Providence effect, in a Manner almost miraculous.

raculous. And what think we? Would it be giving the proper Evidence of our Thankfulness for our Deliverance from these Evils, to cherish the self same Spirit which brought them on? Let us rather learn Wisdom from the Examples of those who have gone before us; and when we see the Rock upon which our Forefathers split carefully avoid it for ourselves. Whatever may be the Errors of Government which at any Time we see or think we see; it will always be a necessary Point of Wisdom to consider how much they are worth. There are no Grievances so small as to be beneath our Care; and perhaps few *often* so great as to justify an Attempt to change. When the Israelites, weary of the Government of God, cried out to have a King set over them, they wanted not a Handle for Complaint. For it is laid to the Charge of Joel and Abiah, Samuel's Sons whom *he made Judges over Israel, that they walked not in his Ways, but turned aside after Lucre, and took Bribes, and perverted Judgment.*

1 Sam. viii. 2, 3. To remedy this, nothing will serve them, but the Form of their Government must be changed. God should no longer be their King; they would

have Kings after their own Fancy. What they were to get by this the History tells us. Their Judges had taken Bribes; their Kings would make them Slaves. The Case has been the same in other Nations; the Case *was* the same among ourselves, in in the Times we are speaking of. Impatience under lesser Burdens laid heavier upon our Shoulders; and violent Measures doubled those Mischiefs, which by Temper and good Management might have been made easy.

Let this then be the Lesson we are to learn from the Deliverance of this Day, considered as a Deliverance from Usurpation and Tyranny. We are now to consider it in a religious View. Religion and civil Government are so nearly allied, that without each others Aid and Influence they will not prosper. For as without the Assistance of civil Laws, Religion cannot command those Temporal Encouragements which in an ordinary State of Things have always been found necessary to carry on Instruction and Discipline; so without a Sense of Religion to lay hold on the Consciences of Men, civil Government will want that Security which is necessary to
give

give Strength and Stability to its Laws. When Disorders arise in the State, Religion always suffers; whilst the Laws made for its Defence and Security, are either obstructed, or perverted, or changed. And on the other Side, when Divisions arise in the Church, it naturally makes Way for Changes in the State; each of the contending Parties endeavouring to draw the Influences of Government to themselves. This was the Case in those unhappy Times, which extreamly heightened the Publick Distractions. For those who disliked our religious Establishment, seeing no Way to get rid of it but by changing the civil Constitution, easily fell in with the popular Discontent; and they were the warmest Enemies of the two, as Discontents always operate more powerfully when animated by a religious Zeal.

The Use that we are to make of this is natural and obvious; that as we wish the Continuance of our civil Constitution, we should be tender of our religious Establishment which revived again along with it. Faults there may be, as there are scarce any human Constitutions without them; and they who will shew us a proper Way to

mend them will deserve our Thanks. But when in the main, Things are well ordered, mere Defects in some particular Parts of our Constitution should be favourably and candidly treated, and not so vehemently pursued as to endanger the Whole. We lop off a Limb to save the Body; but none but mad Men would destroy the Body because a Limb is disordered or unsound.

Like Causes will have like Effects; and should I see the Time when the national Religion and Worship should grow into a general Contempt; should mad, enthusiastick Notions prevail, and sober Piety grow out of Fashion; I could not help fearing some Ill to the State, because *once* I know this Sort of Disorders helped to involve these Nations in Bloodshed and Ruin. Both Causes had their Share: Faction and religious Phrensy; and perhaps neither could have done the Work without the other. But scarce any Government is so well established as to stand the united Efforts of both. Such a Coincidence as this, therefore, is ever to be dreaded, ever to be guarded against; and the only effectual Way to prevent it will be not to be hasty in taking Offence at the publick Appointments, either
of

of Religion or civil Policy. To be Friends to the State, Friends to the Church; and to endeavour so far as our Stations and Capacities will enable us, to make others so too. Suffer but the Discontents to grow and they will naturally mix together. Uneasy Men of either Sort have but one common Interest, and are easily made Tools the one to the other; as their Hopes are embarked in one single Bottom, the Chances that may turn up in a disturbed, unsetled State of Things.

And as there is Danger from a fierce, misguided Zeal in Religion, so there is Danger from no Religion at all. I have before observed that when a Sense of Religion is generally lost in any Nation, Government will want that Security which is necessary to give Strength and Stability to its Laws. And there is nothing more certain both in Reason and Experience. Men of no Religion, can act upon no Motive but their own private Interest, which can never be commensurate to the Calls of publick Duty. Whilst Government retains its Strength and Vigour, and they are made to feel the Advantages of their Attachment, you have them safe and fast. But when a crazy, dis-

tempered Constitution brings on dangerous and trying Times, they are a bad Stay to trust to. They will serve Him that bids them most. Irreligion supposes the Mind estranged from God and the Motives of Virtue, and devoted to Sense. The immediate Consequence of this will be Luxury and Excesses of all Kinds, which make Men poor and abject; unequal to brave and gallant Undertakings, and susceptible of Impressions either for, or against their Country, as Chance may direct. If it be true (and it is a Maxim, I suppose, that no Man will dispute) that the Safety of a Nation lies in the Affections of the People, the meaning must be, that it lies in the Affections of a sober and virtuous People; for a debauched, dissolute Multitude, have no Affections but what center in themselves, and in those little low Views, which occupy Minds addicted to sensual Things. Compare the different States of the Roman Commonwealth, when under a Spirit begotten and cherished by Frugality and Industry, she made herself the Mistress of the World; and, when softened and enervated by the Luxuries of Greece, she became a Prey to the barbarous Nations!----But that which gives Irreligion

a peculiar ill Aspect with respect to us, is, that Religion is wrapt up in our very Constitution. We stand (and it is our great Happiness that we stand) upon the Foot of the Reformation; and next under God our Preservation has been owing to the national Dread of Popery. Take away a Sense of Religion from among the People, and the Dread of Popery will fall of Course; for why should a Man of no Religion be more afraid of Popery than of any Thing else? Will you say, for its *civil* Effects? What are these civil Effects? Why, Persecution. The denying Liberty of Conscience.---Liberty of Conscience! To whom? To those who have no Conscience! Popery will persecute none but those who differ from her. Comply and you are safe. And what should hinder you from complying? The outward Profession is all they can demand; a heavy Burden indeed to those who have a Sense of Religion, and make a Conscience of what they profess; but certainly a very trifling Matter to those that have none.

This shews the Prevalency of irreligious Principles to be a dangerous Thing to our Constitution, as, so far as it goes, it leaves Men quite indifferent what Religion is

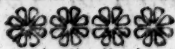
uppermost, and consequently prepared to receive a Popish Government, if ever (which God forbid) any unhappy Concurrence of Affairs, should make the Attempt practicable. If Reports are to be credited, never were the Emissaries of Rome so busy amongst us, never did they reap so plentiful a Harvest, since they were driven out with the unhappy Prince, who gave them Protection, as now of late. I wonder not at this; for never was there a Time when Protestants (of whatever Denomination) were more loose and scandalous in their moral Behaviour; and Religion ever did and ever will suffer by the bad Lives of its Professors; And if the Cause grows, the Effect will increase in Proportion. Suppose then Popery should once more knock at our Gates and demand Admittance; what Sort of a Stand should we be able to make whilst one half of the Nation, perhaps, should be found quite careless about Religion, and Numbers of the rest, already made Profelytes, stand prepared with open Arms to receive it? God's Providence ruleth over all; and how little soever we may deserve it, I hope he has yet Mercies for us in Store. But may I never live to see the Issue of *such* a Tryal!

To

To draw now towards a Conclusion. Your Duty lies plainly before you, both as Subjects to civil Society, and as the Servants of God. Civil Duty must ever make a considerable Branch of religious Obedience; and in this respect let us conscientiously attend to the Rule of the Apostle, 1 Pet. ii. 13. *Submit yourselves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's Sake, whether it be to the King as Supreme, or unto Governours as unto them that are sent by him --- for so is the Will of God.* Submission to Rulers implies a just Deference to their Wisdom in all Points which concern the common Interest; in which we should judge with Moderation and Candour, and be cautious of imputing to Male-Administration every Thing we dislike, the Reason whereof we may not, perhaps, sufficiently understand. The Operations of Government are seen; the Springs of Action lie hid; and yet, without knowing these, we can form no true Judgment of Things.

As to our Religion, let it be *without Hypocrisy*; sincere and sober; equally moving between the Excesses of *Fanaticism* and *Superstition*, and a *profane Neglect* of the Ordinances of God. Authority has pre-
scribed

scribed to us a Method of publick Worship; and with this we ought to be content, so long as we see no such Defects in it as touch the main Substance of Religion; and let the great and only Contention among us be, which shall most *adorn the Doctrine of Jesus Christ*, in his Life and Conversation. This is the proper End of Religion, to teach us to subdue our inordinate Passions, and to bring the *whole Heart* in Obedience to the Law of God; and he that makes this good Use of it, will be a Friend to himself, a Friend to Religion, and an Ornament to Society.





S E R M O N XX.

Preached on the KING's INAUGURATION.

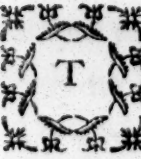


PSALM cxlvii. 12, 13, 14.

*Praise the Lord O Jerusalem; praise thy God
O Zion;*

*For he hath strengthened the Bars of thy
Gates, and hath blessed thy Children with-
in thee.*

*He maketh Peace in thy Borders, and filleth
thee with the finest of the Wheat.*

 HIS pious Exhortation (and ma-
ny of the like Sort, we meet
with in the Book of Psalms) is
founded upon this common Principle of
Religion, that this World and the Things
pertaining to it, are under the Government
and Direction of God's Providence. The
Scripture

Scripture carries this Doctrine to Events of all Kinds; to those which concern private Persons; to those which relate to Families; and to those which affect publick Bodies or Societies of Men. *The Lord looketh from Heaven----from the Place of his Habitation he looketh upon all the Inhabitants of the Earth. He fashioneth their Hearts alike, he considereth all their Works. ---His Eye is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his Mercy, to deliver their Souls from Death, and to keep them alive in Famine. Psalm xxxiii. 13, &c. Thine O Lord, is the Greatness and the Power----All that is in the Heaven and in the Earth is thine----Both Riches and Honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all ---and in thine Hand it is to make great, and to give Strength unto all. 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12. I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my Cause; who doth great Things, and unsearchable; marvellous Things without Number---to set up on high those that be low, that those who mourn may be exalted to Safety. He disappointeth the Devices of the Crafty, so that their Hands cannot perform their Enterprize. He taketh the wise in their own Craftiness, and the*
Counsel

Counsel of the froward is carried headlong. Job v. 8---14. The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our Refuge.---He maketh Wars to cease unto the End of the Earth; he breaketh the Bow, and cutteth the Spear in sunder, he burneth the Chariots in the Fire. Psalm xli. 7---9.

These Passages shew that amidst all the Workings and Contrivances of human Wisdom, and all the various Operations of visible Causes, there is a secret invisible Hand that moderates the whole; giving Efficacy and Success to some, and frustrating others, as the Views of infinite Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness shall direct. Which Doctrine, as it does great Honour to the Supreme Being, so it also serves much to the Comfort and Benefit of wise and good Men; who considering every Thing that happens here below, as the Work of an over-ruling Providence, will be less disturbed at the various Events and Issues of Things, and draw in every Accident, whether prosperous or adverse, to minister as a Handmaid to Virtue.

It is this Principle which worketh Submission and Patience; which fills them with Hope, with Trust, and with Thankfulness;

fulness; which calls them back to themselves, when they begin to grow forgetful, to see if there be any *Root of Bitterness* which makes them offensive or unfavoury; any Virtue, any Praise, which may recommend them to Protection and Favour; any Duty to which the Nature and Circumstances of God's Dispensations doth specially engage them. The Dispensation which this Day's Solemnity calls to our Remembrance, viz. the Deliverance of these Nations from Popery and Tyranny; is an Act of Providence, which will suggest many useful and important Lessons of Instruction to those who will seriously attend to it; in which it shall be my present Business to give you Assistance. But I should not do Justice to my Subject at this Time, if I should not consider this Blessing as it stands connected with another, for which we have very lately offered up our Praises and Thanksgivings to God; I mean our being delivered from the Dangers and Expences of a foreign War, and re-established in quiet and peaceable Times. War is the Hazard of every National Good; and if ever this Nation shall become subject to a foreign Power, it will
be

be the Loss of every Privilege of which we stand now possessed as a free Nation, whether civil or religious. But if we consider our Deliverance from this Danger, as an Act of Providence in our Favour; something, in return, will be due from us to God, besides the Sacrifice of the Lips, which is of no Worth, when the Heart and the Lips do not go together. Every Instance of God's Mercy is a Call to Duty; to which the Nature of the Benefit received is a plain Direction. Are you sick and again restored to Health? Apply your Strength to God's Honour. *Make not your Members the Instruments of Unclean-ness.* Are you poor, and doth God make you rich? Use your Riches well. Feed the Hungry and cloath the Naked. This it is that shews a thankful Heart; when the Use of any Benefit is made to answer the Intent and Purpose of the Benefactor. Gratitude, in the very Notion of it, is a Disposition to return an Obligation, so far as it is in our Power; to repay Kindness for Kindness, Love for Love; which, in Cases where God is concerned, can no otherwise appear than by a Heart intirely devoted to his Service; in all Things
studying

studying to please him, and especially in the proper Use of those good Things, which are immediately the Subject of our Thanks and Praises when we solemnly present ourselves to do him Honour in the Face of his Congregation. To use them improperly, is to affront him, because it is contrary to his Will and Intention in bestowing them; and this will un sanctify all our solemn Acts of Worship, and turn them into solemn Profanations.

Thus much for the Point in general. Let us now consider more particularly the Blessings which this Day calls to our Remembrance, and which we are to consider as secured to us (for the present) by the Return of quiet and peaceable Times. The Glory of a reasonable Creature is to pay God a reasonable Service; and the Liberty of doing this without Disturbance or Molestation from others, is justly considered as the first Privilege of a free Government. How stood the Case in this Respect in the Times of Popery; and how does it now stand in Popish Countries? Why, notwithstanding that the Doctrines of the Church of Rome are in several important Articles contrary to the Scripture;
yet

yet those who see this Contrariety (as it is scarce possible that any sensible unprejudiced Person who reads the Scripture should not see it) are not at Liberty to renounce these Doctrines, and profess such a Faith, and follow such a Way of Worship, as in their own Judgments and Consciences they shall approve. No; if they cannot believe as the Church believes, they must profess against their Belief, or they must be undone. The Reformation (with the Laws subsequent to it) hath broken this Yoke from off our Necks; by opening a System of Faith and Worship agreeable to the Scriptures, and still leaving Liberty to those who should dislike the established Worship, to separate from it, and form themselves into other Communions, without exposing themselves to any Violation of their civil Rights and Properties. The proper and natural Use of this Privilege, is undoubtedly this; that as every Man is left at Liberty to follow his own Conscience, he should do his best to inform his Conscience, and honestly to serve God in that Way of Worship which his Conscience shall best approve: And it would be an Abuse, if a Person should pretend

Scruples of Conscience, where there are really none, or would be none, if he would employ that Care and Impartiality in considering Things that he ought to employ : Or, because the Law ties him down to no particular Way of Worship, to join in no Way of Worship at all. Every Man as a Christian is obliged to join in some Way of publick Worship. The Law supposes this Obligation, and only leaves him the Liberty of chusing which. But the Law never intended to give a Liberty to profess no Religion (nor if it did, could any Christian consistently with his Profession make Use of such a Liberty) though it was very obvious to foresee, that in corrupted Times this Liberty would be made Use of by many, as in Fact it has been, and is to this Day. For though those Appointments of Christianity, the Use of which constitutes the external Profession, are in no wise burdensome ; yet there is that in them which will be disagreeable to Men too much occupied in the Business or Pleasures of this World ; who being left entirely to themselves, and without any Checks from Authority, will be apt to neglect them ; and in proportion as this Neglect

lect grows to be frequent and habitual, the Sense of Religion will gradually decay, and Men forget almost that they are Christians. And is it not a manifest Perversion of Things, when that which Providence intended as a Means to preserve true Religion is made an Instrument of its Destruction? Religion is in the Nature of it a free and voluntary Service, and therefore a Liberty of private Judgment is necessary for its Preservation; for if a Man through Fear or Constraint, worships God in a Way which in his Mind and Conscience he cannot approve, this is not Religion, but Impiety. And yet it is as plain that if a Person who is left to his Liberty to chuse for himself which Way of Worship he likes best, shall take the Liberty to chuse none, Religion will be destroyed in another Way; because it is true (and Experience will always shew it) that without the Externals of Religion, the inward Power and Virtue of it cannot stand. With what Decency then shall we offer to God our Praises for preserving our religious Liberties, if our Behaviour shews that we value them not as religious Liberties, but

as Indulgencies of Licentiousness and Sensuality?

It is not natural to suppose that Persons of this Character make any considerable Part of our Assemblies, on this and such like solemn Occasions. But it may be worth the while of every serious Person to consider how little Reason we have to expect the Continuance of that Blessing which we wantonly abuse. The Abuse I take for granted; for it is too notorious to be denied. Let us consider then (I say) whether God may not justly suffer us again to be brought under that Yoke *which neither we nor our Forefathers were able to bear*. I think that the Re-establishment of Popery would be the severest Scourge that God could lay upon this Nation. At present we stand safe in our Establishment, which I pray God long to preserve. But what Establishments, what Securities can stand, when God withdraws the Hand that supports us, and gives us up to Justice?

If we look upon the Use we make of our Civil Liberties, I am afraid we shall not find much more to comfort us. The End of Civil Liberty is that Life and Property may be safe, and every Man may quietly

quietly enjoy the Fruits of his Labour and Industry. The peaceable Times which we have seen restored, give this Liberty from without ; and the Frame and Structure of our Constitution secures it from within. Unjust War is an Attack upon Property : Arbitrary Laws and Constitutions without the National Consent, are an Encroachment ; and from both we are alike free. But what is the Use of Liberty and Property ? To be a Benefit to the Owners no Doubt ; but yet so as to consist with the publick Safety. For the publick Safety, being the Security of private Liberty ; a Liberty inconsistent with the publick Safety, is a Liberty which destroys itself. This will be the Case when Liberty affects to extend itself farther than the wholesome Laws of Society will admit. Society is, in the Nature of it, a Restraint upon Liberty, as every Man's private Reason is, whether he is under Government or not. A Man in a State of Nature cannot challenge a Liberty to do every Thing ; but such Things only as are fit for a reasonable Creature to do. But Society is a Restraint even upon natural Liberty ; for the Laws of Society having the whole for their

Object, should correspond with what is best and fittest for the whole; with which if private Interest interferes (as many Times it will) private Interest must give Way. Every Extension of Liberty therefore beyond the Limits which the natural Laws of Society have prescribed to it, is an Abuse of Liberty; and an Abuse it is to which the freest Commonwealths are most liable. Arbitrary Will and Pleasure strikes Awe and Terror; but where Authority sits gentle and easy, we are more disposed to take Liberties that are not fit; because the Operations of Fear work more strongly than the Checks of Modesty and Ingenuity. Governors sometimes bring this Evil upon themselves by too great an Affectation of Popularity; sometimes it is the Effect of Distempers in the State: But an Evil it is (whencesoever it may come) that every true Friend to Liberty would wish to have removed, since there is no worse Tyranny upon Earth, than when those who should obey are become our Masters.

The obvious Reflection from hence is, that if we would shew our Thankfulness for the Blessings of peaceable Times, and the

the Security of our Civil Establishment, we should be ready to pay due Obedience to our Superiors; to the King and all that are in Authority under him; because the contrary Behaviour tends to destroy these Blessings; and it is very absurd to pretend to thank God for what we do not value; or to suppose that we value, what (so far as in us lies) we are pulling down with our own Hands. In Respect of Property, our Thankfulness will best appear when we make a sober Use of the good Things of Life. Peace opens the Way to Riches and Plenty; and a proper Application of them to the Ends for which Providence intended them, is the right Use of Liberty. If we are sober and temperate in our Pleasures; open to Acts of Humanity and Beneficence; this will make them Blessings. But if we dissolve in Luxury and Excess; if Avarice ties up our Hands from doing Good; or if sensual Indulgence squanders away that Substance that should be useful to our Families, to our Neighbours, to our Friends, or to our Country; this turns the Blessing into a Curse; and a Nation under such a Surfeit as this, is in a much worse Condition than when pinched by

the Necessities of War, or by the Oppressions of arbitrary Power. A State of Suffering, though irksome and bitter to us, may yet be wholesome, and help forward our Virtues, in Proportion as it cuts off those Supplies that minister to our Vices; and when Experience has made us wise, and the Sense of our Oppressions has roused our Courage and made us valiant, Liberty encroached upon or lost, may again be recovered. But there seems to be no Hope whilst a Nation is abandoned to Excess, and lost to all Sense of Virtue, whether publick or private. It must, like the Body natural, when it is overcharged with Humours, and the vital Parts can no longer perform their Functions, suffer a Dissolution.

You have seen what is the proper Behaviour our present Circumstances considered, and in what Way we may best shew our Thankfulness for the Blessings for which we are now making our Acknowledgments to Almighty God. And I so much the more readily offer these Thoughts to your Consideration, as they are proper not only on the present Occasion, but at all Times, when we may be
called

called upon by publick Authority, to humble ourselves before Almighty God, either in Thankfulness for his Mercies, or in Fear of his Judgments. In all these Cases, the first and leading Point is a serious Sense of Religion, which we should all of us endeavour to cultivate in our Families, as well as in ourselves, by a sober and virtuous Behaviour; by encouraging a due Attendance upon God's Worship, and other proper Exercises of Piety, and banishing those vain and idle Amusements, which divert us from them. For in proportion as we more attend to the Things of this World, we shall find both less Leisure and less Inclination to apply ourselves to those, which concern the Life that is to come; and when Corruptions of this Kind get into Families and Neighbourhoods, it is impossible to say where they will stop. All Men see and feel the Necessity of a careful Education of their Children; and happy shall we be, if by the most prudent Behaviour, and the most diligent Instruction, we may be able sufficiently to fortify them against those bad Examples that they will meet with when they first set out in the World. But how will the Case stand, if the

the Parents themselves should be those bad Examples; and instead of endeavouring to form them to a serious Turn of Mind, should initiate them in every Art, in every Invention, that helps to dissipate Thought, and make them regardless of their principal Interest? It is this that makes that idle Spirit which so much prevails in these Times so exceeding dangerous, that it is laying up a Treasure of Mischief for Generations to come. If our Follies could die with us, and nobody were hurt by them but ourselves, it would be something tolerable; for we might hope for a wiser Generation to succeed us. But what Hope can there be when from the first Dawnings of Reason, Children see nothing about them but Sports and Pastimes, to which they are bred up as to a Trade? What, I say, is to be expected, but that we go on from bad to worse, and that the Sons setting out where their Fathers left off, every Age should improve in these Vanities, till there shall be no Sense of any Thing that is serious left amongst us? To what Purpose then is it to boast of our Constitution, whilst we ourselves are digging up the Foundations upon
which

which it stands? There is nothing more plain, than that when the National Virtues are lost, our Liberties cannot long outlive them. For what is it but Virtue, that ties together those Links by which Societies are upheld? Or where shall we find our Liberties when the Commonwealth is undone? Honesty, Industry, Frugality, a due Distribution of Justice, and a Regard to the Rank and Situation in which every Man is placed, are all of them the natural Effects of Virtue; and in proportion as these are cultivated, Societies will flourish. But Excess and Luxury will tie up the Hands of Industry; Poverty, which succeeds, will drive out Honesty, the Want of which will be felt in every social Act. Nor Magistrates will rule with Justice, nor Subjects obey with Chearfulness: All Orders and Distinctions will be confounded; and the Studies and Endeavours of Men, which ought to run in one Channel, directed to the publick Good, will be broken into numberless little Streams, to feed private Interest; till private Interest can no longer support itself, but falls, together with the publick, in one common Calamity.

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These Things are very plain and obvious to Reason; and yet there are few, perhaps, who will be convinced of them, till it is too late to be convinced. The wise Providence of God (sollicitous for the Safety of Mankind) hath so ordered it, that Bodies politick, as well as Bodies natural, should bear great Disorders before they suffer Dissolution; and when Vice is seen to prevail, whilst every Thing in the State goes on in its usual Course, we are too apt to fancy it may be so for ever. But this surely is judging wrong. When a Man falls into a Fever or some other grievous Distemper, we do not immediately give him over for lost; but no Man, I suppose, has so little Sense, as not to see that Fevers and other Disorders are the Motions of Nature towards a Dissolution. A Man may recover from a Distemper, and so may a State; but there is a certain Point, in Respect to both, beyond which Nature cannot go. Men must die, and so must States; and when they do, Vice will probably be the Distemper, as commonly it has been. What then remains for us to do? Are we to go on and see how much Folly and Wickedness the Constitution

tion will bear before it sinks? Or are we to seek the Remedy in Time, and try to live as long as we can? Let us but act with the same Prudence that we shew in other Cases, and we shall do what is right.

There is but one Way to conquer bad Habits, and that is a resolute self-Denial; and if this is hard and grievous to us (as hard it will be in proportion as the Habit is strong upon us) let us remember that it is necessary in order to prevent a worse Mischief. We are contented to submit to painful Operations to save our Lives, or to preserve a Limb; and why not to preserve our Virtues, without which we shall live to very little, or to a bad Purpose? But the Difference lies here. The Diseases of the Body are attended with Uneasiness; and the Danger, if we will not submit to the Cure, is imminent and apparent: But Pleasure, which is the Bane and Poison of the Mind, steals upon us by Degrees, and keeps our Danger out of Sight. Attentive to what is present, we seldom give ourselves Leisure to look before us, till we meet our Ruin, and it is too late to retreat. This sufficiently shews
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the Difficulty of a Reformation in such Cases; but it will not shew it not to be necessary; and if it is necessary, the Difficulty of it will be a Reason, not why it should be neglected, but, why it should be attended to with greater Diligence.

National Vices, when they grow up to great Extravagancy, are seldom cured till they cure themselves, that is, till they come to their natural Period. Why then (will some one ask) should it be attempted?----Trouble not yourself about this: For I am not calling upon you to mend the World, but to mend yourself. God will mend the World when he sees fit, and by Ways of his own chusing. But God works by his Instruments; and such every Man is in his Rank and Station. Do you then your Duty, and it may do something: What remains unfinished leave to God; in which you will have this Comfort, that (whatever becomes of this World) you will have a sure Stake to trust to, when this World and *all the Workers of Wickedness shall be destroyed*. You will meet (perhaps) with Rebuffs in corrupted Times; and be called precise, formal, unpolite, ungenteel, or whatever other Terms there be

be, by which *disorderly Walkers* love to stigmatize those, who will not run into the same Degree of Excess with themselves. But it is your Lot and you must bear it. Your present Reproach will sometime or other be your Glory. It is not true Glory to have the Voice of the giddy Multitude, but of the few that are intelligent and wise ; which will be a Pledge to assure us of that which is the very Summit and Perfection of Glory, the Approbation of God looking down upon the Earth, and marking us out as the Favourites of Heaven.

To whom, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory both now and for ever. Amen.



DISCOURS

God's Government

For the People

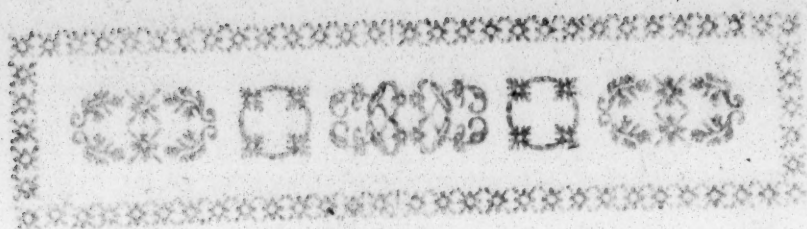
By HENRY

T W O
DISCOURSES
O N
God's Governing Providence.

Formerly published and now reprinted.

By HENRY STEBBING, D.D.

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DISCOURSE I.

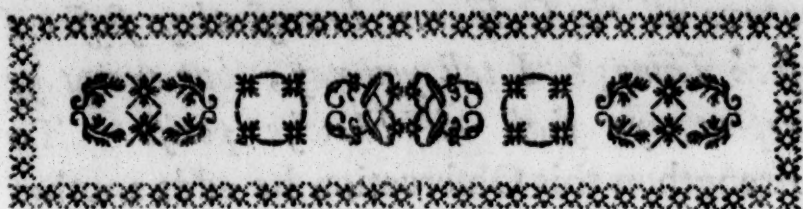
Published as preparatory to the religious Observance of the Day of Publick Fasting, appointed by Authority, on Occasion of the Earthquakes at Lisbon, and other Places, in the Year 1756.



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—Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.

THE Context informs us, that there were some who told our Saviour of the Galilean who shed Pilate's blood mingled with their Sacrifices; that is, whom Pilate slew whilst they were offering their sacrifices. To which our Saviour answers, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above



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LUKE xiii. 35.

---Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.

THE Context informs us, that *there were some* who told our Saviour of *the Galileans whose Blood Pilate had mingled with their Sacrifices*; that is, whom Pilate slew whilst they were offering their Sacrifices. To which our Saviour answers, *Suppose ye that these Galileans were Sinners*

above all the Galileans, because they suffered such Things? I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. To strengthen this Observation he adds another Example---Or those eighteen upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell and slew them; think ye that they were Sinners above all Men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay; but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.

It is very natural to conjecture, by the Turn of this Answer, that those who told our Saviour this Story of the Galileans, did it not without some Censure upon the Sufferers, as more obnoxious to God's Justice than other Men. Mankind even at this Day, is very apt to do the same Thing upon like Occasions. Let us take the Thing in this Light, and see what our Saviour's Answer amounts to: *I tell you nay---what is it he here denies? Why not that these Galileans were Sinners, nor yet that this Destruction was the Judgment of God upon them for their Sins. But he denies that their suffering such Things was a sufficient Ground whereupon to conclude, that they were greater Sinners than the rest of the Galileans who did not suffer them. So again, with Respect to those eighteen up-*
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on whom the Tower of Siloam fell and slew them, he does not deny that they were Sinners, nor that they were thus overwhelmed because they were Sinners; he only says, that this was no Evidence that they were greater Sinners than the other Inhabitants of Jerusalem were. So that nothing can be raised upon these Words in Disparagement of the common Belief, which has prevailed in all Places and in all Ages, *viz.* That God in the ordinary Course of his Providence, does interpose to punish wicked Men or wicked Nations in this World. But what follows in the Text, most evidently supports this Notion; *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*; which is as plain a Declaration of a vindictive Providence presiding over Men as is possible. To say that *except ye repent, ye shall perish*; is in other Words to say, that God will punish for Sin; and it was a Call upon the Jews to make Use of the Examples that were before their Eyes, as a Warning to themselves, who were not, therefore, the less Sinners, because God had hitherto spared them, but would certainly be the greater Sufferers, if they accepted not the Grace

offered by him, and turned not unto God by true Repentance. And this was afterwards verified upon them in a remarkable Manner. For as Pilate mingled the Blood of these Galileans with their Sacrifices, and those eighteen were slain by the Fall of the Tower in Siloam; so it happened to Them from the Romans, who enclosed their City, and upon the very Day appointed for killing their Passover, slew many of them in the very Temple, whilst others were crushed in Pieces by the Ruins of the Towers of the City.

It has ever been the Case that God has been more gracious in giving Warnings than Man has been wise in taking it. The old World wanted not Warning of the approaching Deluge; but they regarded it not. *They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in Marriage, till the Day that Noah entered into the Ark; and knew not (that is, considered not) until the Flood came and took them all away.* Matt. xxiv. 38, 39. So it was with the Jews: Their Captivities were foretold by their Prophets, and their final Destruction by our blessed Saviour; yet they repented not. God doth not in these Days send his
 Prophets

Prophets to warn us; but he warns us by his Word and the Works of his Providence, when he makes the Examples of Wickedness the Examples also of his Justice. Happy for us, when such Examples have their due Effect in calling us back to ourselves, when we have deviated from the Paths of Virtue. But let us take Heed of passing rash Judgment upon the Sufferers in Consequence of such Events; or of singling out of People's Characters what we do not like, and saying; *This is the Sin* for which they are punished. This is not our Business; nor did our Saviour make it any Part of his; but, without so much as saying whether the Galileans were or were not Sinners, or of what Nature or Kind their Sins were, immediately calls the Jews to the Judgment of themselves. If I know a Man to be a Sinner, I must judge him to be a Sinner: But this Judgment arises not as a Consequence from what he suffers, but from its own proper Evidence, which would have been the same whether he had suffered or not. And if when I see the Sin, I likewise see Mischief following close at the Heels of it, I both may and should take Judgment

ment to myself, so far as to make the Example a Matter of Caution; that is to say, I may judge or believe, that possibly or probably, the Mischief was sent as a Punishment for the Sin; because it agrees with God's general Method of dealing with Sinners, as declared in his holy Word. Those who will not suffer us to go thus far without taking Offence (if such there are) may pretend Tenderness; but the Offence really springs from Unbelief. If we are to raise any Conclusion from such Examples, we cannot say less than this; and if we are to raise none, they are offered to us in vain. But the Scripture directs us to take Notice of these Things as Warnings to Repentance; and if we would make this good Use of all the Sin and Mischief that we see in the World, and avoid Sin for Fear of its Consequences; we should act a very wise Part, and answer the End which Providence intended by such Examples.

But there is something deeply rooted in human Nature which defeats these Measures of Providence. We care neither to part with our Vices, nor to see the Rod of God hanging over our Heads. We would,

if we could, sin on and be safe too. This puts us upon Tricks, and Contrivances, to destroy this troublesome Conjunction of Sin with Misery; which was Epicurus's Master-Piece. But this Man did not do his Work. He cut the Knot which he could not untie. He could not shew, that, supposing a wise and righteous Governor of the World, there can be any Safety for Sinners. If he had done this, he had been a Master indeed! But instead of this, he absolutely discards a Providence; and, as he had made (or fancied he had made) a World without God, so he left it to go on without him too. There are some such Philosophers in these Times; and there are Prejudices which will minister a Handle to those who are disposed to take it.

In the first Place they will tell you, that this (supposed) Providence of God in punishing Sinners in this World is not equal.

Bad Men perish; and so do good ones too, by the very same Methods: By War, by Famine, by Pestilence, and the like. And does not our Saviour tell you as much? He tells you, that the Galileans, whose Blood Pilate mingled with their Sacrifices, were

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not greater Sinners than other Galileans who met not with the same Fate. He tells you, that they upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell, and flew them, were not Sinners above those who escaped. This is disclaiming an equal Providence. For how else were it consistent that those who were equally, and, perhaps, more guilty, should not have been alike involved in the same, or in greater Ruin: This notwithstanding, he both gives and repeats his Advice, *Repent, or ye shall all likewise perish.* The Truth is, that an equal Providence enters not at all into the Notion of a vindictive Providence. No-body maintains that under an ordinary Providence, God distributes equal Justice in this World: Nor is this any Impeachment of the Justice of Providence; because we believe, that God *hath appointed a Day in the which he will judge the World in Righteousness; in which every Man will receive the due Reward of his Deeds.* Nevertheless, we may consistently say (and it is all we say) that for the present Terror of evil Doers, God may and does interpose, when he sees meet, to punish wicked Men and wicked Nations. So that the proper Use of the

Doctrine

Doctrine of a vindictive Providence is, not that because we see other wicked Men punished, we ourselves shall certainly be punished; but, that because others are punished, we also (if we do wickedly) very probably may be punished; which is a Consideration that prevails upon us in every other Instance in common Life. If your Neighbour's House should be on Fire, it is not certain that Your's will be burnt: Yet you use the proper Precautions; and you would be reckoned a mad Man if you should not. If a Master punishes a Servant for his ill Behaviour, another Servant may find Favour; but no wise Man will think himself secure, but, admonished by the Example, will take Care not to offend. It is in this very Light, in which St. Paul places this Argument in the tenth Chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians; where having recounted the several Judgments of God upon the Israelites, he says (ver. 11.) that *these Things happened unto them for Ensamples, and are written for our Admonition, that we should not lust after evil Things.* And yet St. Paul cannot be supposed to have been ignorant of what common Experience and Observation shews,

viz. That all Men have not equal Justice done them in this World, but that whilst God punisheth some, he spareth others, not less, but perhaps more, deserving Punishment.

All this you will say, would be very right, if we were sure, that when bad Men suffer it is the Punishment of God for their Sins. But how do we know this? Bad Men suffer; but we see not the Hand of God in their sufferings. The Galileans were slain; but they were slain by Pilate. The eighteen were overwhelmed by the Fall of the Tower of Siloam---It was old and crazy (you will say) and happened (unluckily) to fall just at that Time, as we see in many Instances. By what Circumstance then, by what Connexion, will you shew that God was more concerned in these than in all other common Events? Truly I know not, nor are you or I at all concerned to know it. If our Saviour were now among us, and should be told of a House falling down, somewhere in London, and killing many, I presume he would give the same Answer. And should he be farther asked, how he knew that the Hand of God was more concerned

cerned in this than in any other ordinary Event; he would tell all such Enquirers, as he has told us, that all Events, ordinary or extraordinary, are in the Hand of God. *Not a Sparrow shall fall on the Ground without your Father; yea, the very Hairs of your Head are all numbered by him,* Matt. x. 29, 30. Nor was this the Doctrine of Christ only; it was the Faith of all the ancient People of God. Hear the elegant Description of it by the royal Psalmist, which I will give you in the Translation that is most familiar to you. *He covereth the Heaven with Clouds, and prepareth Rain for the Earth, and maketh the Grass to grow upon the Mountains, and Herb for the Use of Men. He giveth Fodder unto the Cattle, and feedeth the young Ravens that call upon him.--- He giveth Snow like Wool, and scattereth the Hoar-Frost like Ashes. He casteth forth his Ice like Morsels; who is able to abide his Frosts? He sendeth out his Word and melteth them; He bloweth with his Wind and the Waters flow,* Pf. cxlvii. Or as it is in the Book of Job, Chap. xii. 7, &c. *Ask now the Beasts and they will teach thee, and the Fowls of the Air, and they will tell thee.*

Or

Or speak to the Earth and it shall teach thee; and the Fishes of the Sea shall declare unto thee. What shall they teach? What shall they declare? Why the Power and Wisdom of God continually interposing to govern the World. For so it follows--- In whose Hand is the Soul of every living Thing, and the Breath of all Mankind--- With him is Wisdom and Strength --- He breaketh down, and it cannot be built again --- He withholdeth the Waters and they dry up; also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the Earth--- He taketh away the Heart of the Chief of the People of the Earth; and causeth them to wander in a Wilderness where there is no Way. They grope in the Dark without Light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken Man. Have we not seen or heard of any Thing like this! --- Lay then this down as a sure Principle (and sure it is) that God is in every Thing we see, in every Thing we enjoy, and in every Thing we suffer; and you will have a ready Answer to all the Cavils which vain Philosophy offers to thrust God out of the World. Let them talk of their natural Causes till they are tired (and soon they will be tired if they have Sense)

Sense) it helps them not, so long as natural Causes themselves are under the Direction of Providence. But the very Moment you set up, or give into a System of Causes and Effects, which separate God from his Works, you destroy every Effect which the Consideration of what we see about us should have in reforming our Lives, and slide into the Folly or Madness of Atheism---and to Atheists I have nothing to say.

I take it for granted, that your own Thoughts have already prevented me in applying this Subject to that great Calamity which has lately befallen the City of Lisbon, and which has been felt (with more or less Severity) in many other Parts of the World. It is a Subject highly deserving our most serious Consideration, and upon which it will become us to think, and to speak, with good Sense, and with Piety. Are you asked, whether this is the Work of God? you may answer boldly it is his Work; as much as is the Rising and Setting of the Sun; as much as it is his Work that we have Clouds and Rain; that the Seasons are kindly or unkindly; that the Weather is serene or

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tempestuous, and the like. Would you know whether this was meant as a Punishment for their Sins? You may answer, that we can determine nothing with Certainty of the precise Intentions of Providence in this Case, who hath other Reasons of sending Evil upon Man besides the Punishment of Sin. But (for the Reason before given) you may say, with great Probability, that these Men were punished for their Sins (especially if their Sins were great and crying) which I conceive our Saviour's Words will justify. But you are not to argue from their Calamities, what or how great their Sins were; nor presume to determine whether if their Sins had been less, this Distress would or would not have happened. This is venturing too far into the Secrets of Providence, and the very Mistake which our Saviour reprehends. *Suppose ye that these Galileans were Sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such Things! I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* Turn therefore your Thoughts back upon yourselves; and act in the same Manner, as you would have thought it reasonable to act if you had seen the naked Arm
of

DISCOURSE I. 401

of God scattering Death and Ruin over the Heads of these sinful People. If you would have repented then, do it now. This hurts no-body, and may be the Means of saving you from Destruction.

It hath pleased the Wisdom of our Superiors to appoint a solemn Day of Fasting and Humiliation upon this melancholy Event; and, as it may be of the greatest Consequence to us, that the Day be observed in a Manner acceptable to Almighty God, I hope it will not be thought improper, if I say something that may be useful in the Way of Preparation.

Days of Fasting (we know) in common with all other Acts of outward Worship, receive all their real Worth from the Mind or Spirit that accompanies them. Outward Form and Solemnity should be observed; but yet as a Help to raise those inward Sentiments, both in ourselves and others, which becomes those who are offering themselves as Supplicants to the Throne of Heaven. And as this Event is the greatest Call in its Kind which has been known in the Memory of any Person living, or (I think) recorded in History? I should hope the Solemnity will be proportionable. Earthquakes are common Things, and I

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have

have hitherto treated these no otherwise than as common Events; but, in the Circumstances of them, they have the Appearance of something more than common; and it is scarce possible to read the Accounts we have had from Abroad, without recollecting our Saviour's Prophecy, as it is recorded Luke xxi. when, with the Destruction of Jerusalem, he points also at his second Coming to Judgment. *Nation shall rise up against Nation, and Kingdom against Kingdom, and great Earthquakes shall be in divers Places, and Famines, and Pestilences---There shall be Distress of Nations with Perplexity, the Seas and the Waves roaring. Mens Hearts failing them for Fear; and for looking after those Things which are coming on the Earth; for the Powers of Heaven shall be shaken.* I do not think that we have Light enough in these Matters to pin down this Prophecy to these Events; nor to determine how near or how far off Christ's second Coming may be. There seem to be other Prophecies not yet accomplished, which must be accomplished before this comes to pass. But as the Resemblance between what we now see, and what shall be seen, when
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the last Catastrophe comes, naturally connects them together in our Thoughts; so it will always be our Wisdom, when we see such Signs as these, so far to be apprehensive that *the End of all Things is at Hand*, as to be sober and watch unto Prayer, 1 Pet. iv. 7. Christ's Coming may not be near. But of one Thing we are certain, viz. that every Man's Life is short; and when Death comes, that is to him (to all Intent and Purposes) the Time of Christ's Coming. Therefore since the Voices of God and Man call us, let us gird on our Sackcloth. Let the great ones of the Earth lead the Train, and behave as those who have a Master in Heaven, not as if they thought Religion to be a Thing fit only for the Vulgar. *Let the Elders assemble, let the Congregation be gathered together, even to the Children that suck the Breasts. Let the Priests, the Ministers of the Lord weep between the Porch and the Altar, and let them say, spare thy People, O Lord! **

But with the Shadow there should be Substance; with the Appearance there should be Truth; otherwise, instead of atoning

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for our Sins, we shall make them so much the more provoking. So said God to his People, by the Mouth of the Prophet Isaiah, in that fine Passage, well known, but, which cannot too often be repeated or considered.

The Prophet begins his Prophecy with a heavy Complaint against the Jews, for the consummate Profligateness of their Manners, under all the outward Pomp and Formality of Religion. You will find a Sample of their Vices towards the Close of the first Chapter. *How is the faithful City become an Harlot! It was full of Judgment, Righteousness lodged in it, but now Murderers---Thy Princes (that is thy chief Men) are rebellious and Companions of Thieves. Every one loveth Gifts and followeth after Rewards. They judge not the Fatherless; neither doth the Cause of the Widow come unto them, ver. 21---24.* And upon this View of the Case, he says (ver. 9.) *Except the Lord of Hosts had left unto us a very small Remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah; that is, God would have destroyed us as he did Sodom and Gomorrah.* In the very next Verse he addresses

dresses himself to the ruling Men among
 the Jews.-----Hear the Word of the Lord
 ye Rulers of Sodom, and give Ear to the
 Law of our God ye People of Gomorrah.
 To what Purpose is the Multitude of your
 Sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am
 full of the Burnt-Offerings of Rams, and
 the Fat of fed Beasts---Bring no more vain
 Oblations; Incense is an Abomination to me;
 the new Moons and the Sabbaths, and the
 Calling of Assemblies I cannot away with:
 It is Iniquity, even your solemn Meetings.
 The new Moons and your appointed Feasts
 my Soul hateth; they are a Trouble unto
 me, I am weary to bear them. And when ye
 spread forth your Hands I will hide mine
 Eyes from you; yea, when ye make many
 Prayers I will not hear you: Your Hands
 are full of Blood. Wash ye, make ye clean,
 put away the Evil of your Doings from be-
 fore mine Eyes, cease to do Evil, learn to do
 well, seek Judgment, relieve the Oppressed,
 judge the Fatherless, plead for the Widow,
 Isaiah i. 10---18. You see here that the
 whole Force, Virtue, and Efficacy of reli-
 gious Observances, lies in their Connexion
 with true Repentance; that is, the en-
 tire and thorough Change and Reforma-

tion of the Heart. This is a great Work; not to be done all at once, especially when Men have been long habituated to Sin. There must be a Beginning here as there is in every other Work. And if the Beginning be as it should be, we may have comfortable Hopes, that in the Progress and Conclusion we shall not be disappointed in our Expectations.

The Beginning of Repentance must necessarily be placed in a Sense of our Sins, and in the Belief of the Power, Justice and Goodness of God; for we can go no lower. Because he, who never considers who or what God is; nor knows nor cares whether he is a Sinner or not, is absolutely impenitent. The Law of God is legible to all, and shews us our Duty. When we compare our own Lives with this Law, our own Consciences will tell us in what Instances we have offended. The Consideration of the Perfections of the divine Nature, as visible in the Works of the Creation, will teach us to fear his Wrath; and the gracious Dispensation of the Gospel will shew us upon what Terms we are to hope for Mercy. But these Things are apt to be neglected, and when they

they are neglected, it will be the same Thing; as if we had neither Law nor Gospel; nor Hope or Fear of any Thing hereafter to come. It is the Intention of Providence, by such Examples as we have now before us, to awaken our Attention to these Things, which the Cares and the Business and the Vanities of Life too frequently drive out of our Minds; and if such Examples have this Effect, and with Consciousness of our Guilt, and earnest Resolutions of Amendment, we come to God imploring his Mercy; Our Fasting will be a Service acceptable to him. We shall have done as much as our present Conditions will admit. But we are not to suppose that our Work is finished when the Day is over. The greater Part is yet to come; which is to keep alive those Sparks of Religion which such Occasions have kindled in our Hearts, till they grow up into a shining Light, and not suffer them to languish and die upon our Minds. So that, both before and after, here is a proper and necessary Employment for us. Before, to prepare the Ground to receive the good Seed; and afterwards,

terwards, to enable the Seed sown to bring forth the Fruits of Holiness.

Natural Sense will suggest to every Man, that the Way to carry on a Reformation with Success, is to cut off the Occasions of Sin, and to place ourselves at a proper Distance from every Thing that is apt to divert the Attention from the *one Thing necessary*; to remove (as the Prophet speaks Ezek. vii. 19.) the *Stumbling-blocks of our Iniquity*; those Engines which have poured out upon us the Spirit of Slumber, and given us Eyes that we should not see, and Ears that we should not hear*. And let us make haste to do it; for who can tell how long God will spare us? Have we not seen the whole Earth around us trembling from its very Foundations? Have we not felt the more distant Effects of it, even within ourselves? And who is that Explorer of natural Causes? Who that Searcher into the secret Purposes of God, that can assure us that Destruction will not overtake us in a Moment? What did the Inhabitants of Lisbon know of their being to be destroyed by an Earthquake, before the Moment when they felt the Ground heaving

* Isaiah xxix. 10.

Rom xi. 8.

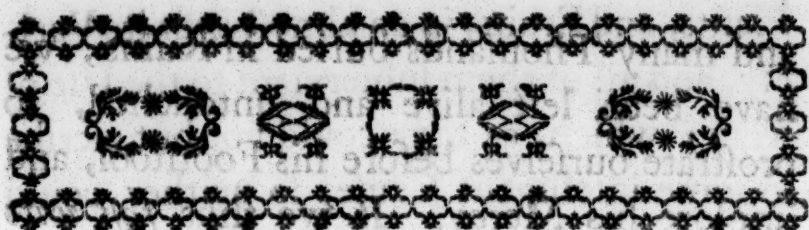
heaving under their Feet ; their Houses falling, and the Walls that had been the Witnesſes of their Luxuries and Debaucheries, prepared inſtantly to become their living Graves ? No more than the Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah knew of their being deſtroyed by Fire and Brimſtone from Heaven. But theſe (in ſome Sort) may be excuſed ; for they had no Warning. Not ſo the Inhabitants of the old World, for they had Warning by the preaching of Noah, but repented not. And have not we had Warning ? Yes ; the greateſt we can aſk, unleſs we expect (what we have no Right to expect) that God ſhould work Miracles to ſave us.

To ſtand out then againſt this Warning, is, in Effect, to ſay, that we will take no Warning till our Deſtruction comes ; and then all Warnings will be at an End. God alone knows the Events of Things, and what he has to do with us. But, if we remain a People to ſolemnize the wiſhed for Day ; I hope, we ſhall not forget, with our Humiliations, to offer up our Thankſgivings to God ; that amidſt theſe Convulſions of Nature ; whiſt Cities have been deſtroyed,
and

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and many Thousands buried in Ruins; we have been left alive and untouched, to prostrate ourselves before his Footstool, and implore his Mercy. If we thus *fast unto God*, he will accept our Prayers, and we may have comfortable Hopes that he will yet spare us. But if our Fast is to begin without Thought, and to end without Reformation; let us take Heed that instead of averting God's Wrath, we *bring not upon ourselves swifter Destruction.*

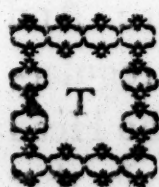




DISCOURSE II.



In which the general Principles laid down in the First, are more distinctly considered.



THAT the same Cause that made the World, also governs the World, as it is the most natural, is, without Doubt, also the most ancient Opinion. The first Mortals saw nothing but what was great and wonderful. Themselves brought into the World they knew not how. The heavenly Bodies shining with Splendor, and moving above them in regular Order; *the Sun ruling the Day; and the Moon and Stars governing the Night.* The Earth under them bringing forth Trees, and
Plants,

Plants, and Fruits, in an almost infinite Variety, and all of them subservient to the Use of Man; which, as they could not but ascribe to some intelligent Cause, so neither could the least Suspicion enter into their Minds, either that Government was not as necessary to preserve the Order and Harmony of the Universe, as it was to establish it at first; or that the Government of the World could be in any other Hand, than the Hand of him that made it. But when Experience had opened to them the Powers of natural Bodies; when Arts and Sciences grew up, and they saw Machines contrived by human Skill, exhibiting Motions and Effects similar to those which they observed in Nature, by the Impulse of Matter upon Matter: And when they saw such Machines, regularly exhibiting such Motions, when the Head that contrived them, and the Hands that put them together, had nothing farther to do with them: This raised a Conceit that such Machines were the Pattern of the World; and that as a Clock or a Watch (for Instance) will shew the Hour of the Day, without any farther Interposition of the Artificer that made it, in Virtue of its original Frame and Constitution; so Nature, in vir-

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DISCOURSE II. 413

tue of its original Frame and Constitution, may and does produce every Effect which we see about us without any farther Interposition of God.

That the ordinary Course of Things is carried on by the Laws of Mechanism (that is by Matter impelling Matter) there can be Question. All Experience shews it. But no Machine is or can be simply and absolutely mechanical; for mechanical Causes and Effects cannot go backwards for ever; but something you must come to at last, which is *not* mechanical. In a Clock or a Watch, the several Movements proceed upon mechanical Laws; but the Weight of the Lead, or the Elasticity of the Spring, which puts them in Motion, are not mechanical. Even so it is in the great Machine of the World, in which there must be something corresponding to Weights or Springs, or all Motion must stop. And who is it that shall hang on its Weights, or draw them up? Who that shall keep the Springs from unfolding? If you can find any Cause equal to this but God, shew it to me.

What I have said comes to this, *viz.* that Philosophy can never (absolutely) separate God from his Works. We must have him

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in the Sky, to hold the Planets in their respective Orbits. We must have him in the Earth and in the Seas, to keep them within their proper Bounds; and in one Word, we must have him throughout the whole System of Nature to support and maintain that GRAVITATING FORCE which gives Consistency and Stability to all material Substances, without which Mechanism itself would cease, and the whole Frame of the Universe fall in Pieces. But this does not come up to the full Notion of a governing Providence; by which we understand such Providence as directs visible and sensible Things, so as to make them subservient to the MORAL Government of God in the rewarding good and punishing bad Men in this World. This is the essential Point in the present Question; the Manner of which different Writers have explained in different Ways. Some have Recourse to the Foreknowledge of God, and by its Aid think they can reconcile a governing Providence with the Notion of an unchangeable Series of Causes and Effects established from the Foundation of the World. I meddle not with these Speculations; which, whether right or wrong, are of no Use, in the Question.

tion. The most familiar, and (I believe) the true Notion is, that God governs this World, not by tying himself down to stated Rules, but by varying his Measures as the Exigencies of his Government require. I see nothing in this repugnant to the Majesty of God, unless you think, (with the Epicureans of old) that it puts more Work into his Hands than it is fit for him to attend to. --- But you are at Liberty to judge of this as you please, provided you agree that God so directs the Operations of natural Causes, as to make them the Instruments of his Favour to good Men, and of his Displeasure against Sinners. This is a Principle in which all Religions agree; and we are now to see upon what Ground it stands, and upon what Evidence it may be supported.

And here it must be confessed, that common Experience and Observation will yield us but small Assistance. So far otherwise, that, even to the Offence of some good Men, in the ordinary Course of Things, all Things happen alike to all, or good Men suffer whilst the Wicked prosper. *My Feet were almost gone, my Treadings had well nigh slipped. And why? I was grieved at the Wicked; I do also see the Ungodly in such Prosperity,*

Prosperity, &c. Pſal. lxxiii. But the first Notice which Mankind had of a governing Providence was God's own Manifestation of it by *Miracles*; the History of which we read in the old Testament. *There*, we have an Account of the Loss of Paradise by Sin: --- Of the Banishment of Cain for the Murder of his Brother: --- Of the Translation of Enoch as the Reward of his Righteousness: --- Of the Wickedness of the old World, and its Destruction by the Deluge; Noah and his Family only excepted, who, by the Eminency of his Piety obtained the Favour of God to be the Father of the new one. When this new World revolted from God, and run into Idolatry; we see Abraham called out to be the Head of a mighty Nation, which grew up and flourished by a perpetual Series of the most wonderful Providences; governed by Laws of God's own Appointment, with Promises of Protection and Blessing, so long as they should be obedient; and Threatnings of Mischief and Destruction if they fell off from him to serve other Gods, which, in the Event, were punctually verified. This was a visible and standing Evidence of a governing Providence; and of this original Source

Source this Doctrine spread itself throughout the whole human Race, and became a received Principle in the Heathen World, as well as among the People of God. The Heathen Nations looked upon their Idol-Gods, as their Protectors or Avengers; and there was a Foundation for it in the true Religion which had obtained from the beginning. Now as all the false Religions that have ever been, were but Corruptions of the original true Religion, the most general and leading Principles of which were preserved, though blended with a Variety of Errors; it is natural to suppose, that those who first went off to Idolatry, and had learned from the Experience of former Ages, that God was not an idle Spectator of human Things, but had *often* interposed to reward the good and punish the bad, transferred this Character of the supreme Being to their false Gods, and conceived THEM to be their Rewarders and Punishers whom they had made the Objects of their Worship; or rather, that having first removed their Trust in God, and placed it on inferior Beings, they transferred that Worship to the Creature which was due to the Creator

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only ; upon this Maxim, that *there* are our Services due *from whence* our Protection comes.

You see then the first Rise of the Doctrine of a governing Providence. Mankind were not left to find it out for themselves, by Reasoning and Speculation upon common Events (which had been leaving them to grope in the Dark for what, in all Likelihood, they would have never come at) but God manifested himself from the very first as the Avenger of Wickedness, and as the Rewarder of good Men in this World. To what End ? Why not to distribute *Impartial Justice* in this World, but *so far* forth only to reward or punish as should be necessary to his Government in this World ; to which an impartial, visible, Administration of Justice is neither necessary nor suitable. Had God intended an impartial Administration of Justice in the Work of his Providence, it would have been so ordered that no righteous Man, should have failed of his Reward in this World ; nor any wicked Man escaped the Punishment due to his Crimes. But the Scripture undertakes for no such Matter. It shews the direct contrary. In the Case of Cain and Abel
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the righteous Man was cut off from the Earth, whilst the Murderer was suffered to live; from which first Example of this Species of Wickedness, many others sprang, till at last the whole Earth was filled with Violence; by which there is no Room to doubt, but that many good Men were destroyed, whilst many bad ones were suffered to fill up the Measure of their Days, who were as wicked as those whom the Flood swept away. And in this there was nothing but what has more or less been common in all Times ever since. But amidst all this Inequality, the great End of Providence was sufficiently preserved; which what it was we may gather from what God said to Pharaoh by his Servant Moses, when he was sent to threaten that he would *bring all his Plagues upon his Heart; ----- and in very deed for this Cause have I raised thee up for to shew in thee my Power, and that my Name may be declared throughout all the Earth.* Exod. ix. 14. --- 16. Whatever Notices of a future State God may have given to Mankind from the Beginning; something was always necessary as a present Restraint to Wickedness. And this was the End of these Interpositions, to let the

World understand, that he took Notice of their righteous or unrighteous Deeds; that he had Power to vindicate the Honour of his Laws; and that he would do so whenever he saw proper Occasions for it. Which Principle, when once established in the Hearts of Men, stood as a constant Check upon them to restrain them from Sin, and a powerful Motive, when they should at any Time offend, to call them back by Repentance.

Miraculous Interpositions were not intended to be perpetual, or permanent; but God's Providence was not to cease. And therefore God took Care to inform us, that what he did visibly by Miracles he would also do in the ordinary Course of Things by the secret, invisable Direction of natural Causes. The Scriptures are so full of this Notion, that it would be endless to be particular. Read only the 28th Chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy, where you will see all the Powers of Nature summoned as his Instruments to execute the Purposes of his Will; to the Good,---in national Prosperity, --- in domestic Comforts, --- in Safety from their Enemies, --- in fruitful Seasons, --- in a numerous Offspring; with an Abundance

bundance of all Things. To the Bad, in the Reverse of all this,---national Distresses,---Indigence,---Poverty,---Slavery,---Destructions or Molestations of every Kind,---by War,---by Famine,---by all Sorts of Diseases; Consumptions, Fevers, Inflammations, the Emroids, the Scab, the Itch, &c. from whence nothing less can be understood than that the most common and familiar Events of Life are under God's Direction, and by him used as Instruments, either for the Hurt or Good of Men. This Notion also prevailed among the Heathens, of which you will see a short Proof in the 28th Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, Verse 4. It is no Miracle that a Viper should lurk under a Heap of Sticks and bite a Man: And yet when the Inhabitants of Melita (whom the sacred Historian calls a *barbarous People*) saw the *Viper* fastning on St. Paul's Hand, they cried out, *no doubt this Man is a Murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the Sea, yet Vengeance suffereth not to live,* These Barbarians were wrong in their Conclusion; for they knew nothing of St. Paul, whether he was or was not a Murderer; but from what they saw concluded concerning his Sin; which

is bad Reasoning. But still, it shewed their Belief of a secret vindictive Providence, which was so universal, that there was not a Corner of the Earth where it did not prevail. And this was the Foundation of their whole Demon-worship; for they considered these Demons as the Dispensers of temporal Things. In truth, the Belief of a secret, directing Providence, is the Foundation of all religious Worship, whether true or false. When we pray for our daily Bread, what do we ask but God's Blessing upon the Earth to yield to us her Fruits in due Season? When we say Grace at our common Meals (if that by many is not thought too great an Honour to the Supreme Being) what do we less than recognize his Sovereign Power, and implore his Aid to sanctify our Food to the Sustainance and Refreshment of our Bodies? This disclaims every Notion of natural Causes and Effects that shuts out God; and supposes his Concurrence and Co-operation, directing the Operations of Nature. Again; when we pray for the Graces and Virtues of the Soul, what do we ask but his Aid to strengthen the good Dispositions of our Hearts, and so to direct and order Things, whether

whether visible or invisible, that we may be kept out of the Way of Temptations ; or, if they beset, and fall upon us, that we may be able to resist and overcome them ? But this supposes the Superintendency of God over us ; seeing our Dangers ; knowing our Strength and our Weakness ; and administering Help to us as the Variety of Circumstances makes it fit and proper. And if this be true, our Worship will be a just and a reasonable Service. But if these are vain Words, then is our Worship also vain ; then every one that goes into his Closet to pray ; then all, every where over the Face of the whole Earth, who are calling upon the most High God, are as uselessly and absurdly employed, as they would be if they were falling down before Images of Wood or Stone, in whom there is no Power to help, nor Sense or Apprehension of what their blind Votaries are doing.

That it is possible for God thus to direct natural Causes to the Hurt or to the Benefit of Man, there can be no Doubt ; for Man himself can do the same Thing in a Degree, and within his Sphere. Upon the Foot of a Series of Causes and Effects pre-established from the Beginning, there seems to be

some Difficulty in the Question. But if you suppose that God so acts by stated Rules, as to have left himself at Liberty to interpose when he sees proper, all will be plain and easy. For, suppose a Ball rolling upon a Plane and by its natural Gravitation carried towards a certain Point; might not you, by the lightest Touch of your Finger, push it towards another Point where it might crush a Worm? And is it not as easy, think you, for God to direct a Meteor flying in the Air, so that it shall burn your House, or strike you dead, which, had it been left to its natural Direction, would have fallen somewhere else, and done no Harm? You direct the Element of Fire either to warm or to consume; the Elements of the Air or Water, to cherish or to annoy: But *God made* these very Elements which you only *apply* to your Use, and is *himself that very Force* by which they serve you; which he can suspend, divert, encrease, or diminish, to your Hurt, or to your Good, just as he pleases. Are the elemental or subterraneous Fires bound up? He can let them loose. Are they broke loose? He can collect them as *in the Hollow of his Hand*. And all this without unhinging the
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the general System, and without any visible Tokens to us, that he is at all concerned, though, in Truth, he is the principal Agent.

In the same Way we may explain how God may direct not only the Motions of the inanimate and passive Part of the Creation, to make them Instruments to carry on the Work of his Providence, but also *the Hearts of Men*, which the Scripture tells us are *in the Hand of God as the Rivers of Water*; and this without destroying the Freedom of human Actions: Because every free Act of a Rational Agent is determined by Circumstances which are always in the Hand of God. The Dispositions and Resolutions of Men are apt to vary from themselves, according to the different Turn or Flow of their Spirits, or the different Circumstances and Situation in Life, as to Health or Sicknefs, Strength or Weaknefs, Joy or Sorrow: And by the Direction of these God may raise Enemies or create Friends; stir up War or make Peace; to the Preservation, or the Destruction, of Men, of Families, or of whole Nations. In all these Cases the Interpositions of God are as truly Variations from the stated Course
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of Things, as in the Case of Miracles. But there is this essential Difference between them, that Miracles, being intended as Evidence, must fall under the Notice of Sense, which the other, not being so intended, need not to do.

But I must observe upon this Argument; that so far as the Evidence of a governing Providence stands upon the Authority of the Scriptures, it is not calculated to convince Unbelievers; and the proper Use of this Observation is to shew the great Evil of Unbelief, which in this (as in many other necessary Points) places Men out of the Reach of Conviction. Mere natural Arguments, will scarce be sufficient to satisfy such as these: But if where Nature fails, Revelation supplies the Defect, we are bound to attend to it at our Peril. It is not my Business at present to justify Revelation; I will only desire those who reject it to consider in what Light they stand as Men of *Reason*. They will not believe the Scriptures which declare a governing Providence. Why will they not believe it? If they would give a reasonable Answer, they must say, because there is not Evidence enough to support their Authority. And yet in Dis-
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paragement of the Scripture, they admit a Point which stands upon no Evidence at all. For their MECHANICAL SYSTEM, which is the Engine by which they throw out a governing Providence, is a mere Presumption. It is in the Nature of it incapable of Proof! From whence should the Evidence arise? Were you present when God laid the Foundations of the Earth? Were you privy to his Counsels? Or do you now see, or can you shew, that original Cause, or those original Causes, established by God at the Creation, from which all the Effects in Nature may be deduced, and into which they may mechanically be resolved? Can you shew the immediate Cause of Lightning or of Rain, or of any other common natural Effect, and from the immediate Cause go back to the second; from the second to the third; and so upward till you come to the last Link of the Chain which hangs immediately upon the Supreme Being? This may be done in the Works of Art; in a Clock, or in a Watch. An Artist will shew you the Dependence of all the Movements upon each other, from the Wheel which moves the Hand that points out

out the Hour; to the Power that is moved immediately by the Weight or Spring. And when you are as well acquainted with the Fabrick of the World, as you are, or may be, acquainted with the Structure of a Clock or a Watch; you will be qualified to talk of your Chain of mechanical Causes and Effects. But alas! the utmost Stretch to which the most improved Philosophy will carry us, is but skimming the Surface of Things, and in its Progress backward from the immediate visible, towards the first invisible, Cause; in one or two Removes, it commonly finds its Period, beyond which it cannot go. But if you see not the whole Chain of Causes and Effects, from the Beginning to the End, and how each Link hangs upon the other; it will be impossible for you to know where the immediate Agency of the Supreme Being ends, and the Operations of mechanical Causes begin. It is very easy for a Man to say, or to fancy that the last known mechanical Cause, depends upon some unknown Cause which is also mechanical: But Proof is the Thing called for; and Proof there is none.

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Leaving then such as these to abound in their own Sense, and to follow their own Heart's Imaginations so long as God shall suffer them; I turn my Discourse to serious Christians, whose Business it is, and whose Wisdom it will always be, to apply the Doctrine of a governing Providence to its proper, intended Use, the *Reformation* of their Lives. God worketh not now by Miracles but in so secret a Manner, that he smites us when we discern not his Hand; upon which Account some have rejected all religious Application or Use of the Works of Providence in an ordinary State of the World, and think themselves to be nothing at all concerned with what happens to others, whether Good or Evil. But this must be guarded against as a dangerous Extream, and a very foolish one too. For what if you cannot * certainly distinguish those

* But strong Probabilities may arise. Hear Archbishop Tillotson. "The Hand of God doth sometimes as by a Finger point at the Sin which it designs to punish; as when remarkable Punishments follow visibly upon notorious Sins; when the Sinner is punished in the very Act and Heat of his Sin; when some great and clamorous Impiety calls down some more immediate and sudden Judgment from Heaven; when a Sin is punished in its own Kind, with a Judgment so plainly suited to it, that the Punishment carries the very Mark and Signature of the Sin upon it; as in the Case of Adonizebeck, who was forced to acknowledge that *as he had done, so God had*

those Cases where God acts by special Interposition, from those where he acts by the simple Operations of natural Causes? You are sure (if you believe the Scripture) that there are such Cases, and there may be more of them than you imagine. You see Wickedness prevailing; you see Misery or Destruction following at its Heels. If you doubt whether God be specially concerned in this, I will not censure you, provided

“ *had requited him*, (Judg. i. 7.) and as in the known
 “ Story of Bajazet, who having been a cruel and barbarous Tyrant, was punished in his own Kind, by falling
 “ into the Hands of Tamerlain, who used him with the
 “ same Insolence and Cruelty which he had exercised towards others. In such Cases as these we do reasonably
 “ collect that such a Judgment was, probably, sent for such
 “ a Sin.” See the last Sermon of the last Volume.

To this I will beg Leave to add a very remarkable Instance, which happened about three Years ago, at Devizes in Wiltshire.

Three Women bargained for a certain Quantity of Corn; and when the Price of it was to be paid, one of them fraudulently secreted her Quota; with which being charged by the other two, she protested with the most solemn Asseverations that she had paid her Money; and prayed that, if she did not speak Truth, *God would immediately strike her dead*. The Words were scarce out of her Mouth when she dropped down dead; and the Money was found in her Possession. A written Memorial of this extraordinary Event now stands fixed up at the Market Cross, where the Thing happened; and I submit it to the common Sense of Mankind, whether this, and such like Instances (which occur in History) are not a very strong, presumptive Evidence, from *Fact*, for the Truth of a directing Providence.

vided you *behave* as if you doubted not. The Scripture directs to this Conduct in respect both of the Good and the Evil of this Life. As an Example I will point out to you the History of Joseph. The Hatred of his Brethren, ---their selling him to the Ishmaelites, who carried him into Egypt, and sold him to Potiphar; ---His Advancement in Potiphar's House, and afterwards in Pharaoh's Court; --- The Famine in Canaan, and Jacob's sending his Sons into Egypt to buy Corn, &c. have nothing in them that visibly points out the Hand of Providence, but are all of them natural Incidents, hanging the one upon another, according to the common Course of Things; yet Joseph refers the whole Matter, from the Beginning to the End, to the Providence of God. *Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that you sold me hither; for God did send me before you, to preserve you a Posterity in the Earth, and to save your Lives by a great Deliverance.* Gen. xlv. 5---8. But what say the ten Bretheren among themselves when Joseph had sent them to Prison; *We are verily guilty concerning our Brother, in that we saw the Anguish of his Soul,*

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Soul, when he besought us, and we would not bear; therefore is this Distress come upon us. Therefore his Blood is required. Chap. xlii. 21, 22. What say they to Joseph when the Cup was found in Benjamin's Sack? *God hath found out the Iniquity of thy Servants.* Chap. xliv. 16. These Men, on both Sides, spoke according to the Maxims of the Religion in which they had been bred. Joseph saw the Goodness of God in the Preservation of his Family. His Bretheren, conscious of their Guilt, confess the Justice of what had now befallen them, which they consider as a Punishment inflicted by the Hand of Providence. And where would be the Harm if upon every Calamity that befalls him, a Man should look into his own Conduct, and if, knowing himself guilty in some material Instance, he should say to himself in the same Language --- *the Lord hath found out mine Iniquity, --- therefore is this Distress come upon me.* --- Would he be the worse Man? Would he not have before him a very feeling Motive to lead him to Repentance? Call not this Presumption! For by such Expressions as these Nobody pretends to

to any certain, positive, Knowledge of God's secret Purposes (which, in this Question, is the only culpable Sense of the word *Presumption*) they are rather significant, of those Apprehensions, Fears, or Misgivings, which naturally arise from God's declared Purpose to punish Sin. For the same Reason neither would it be Presumption, if, when I see another Man wicked and miserable, I should say---*God hath found out his Iniquity*; or---*the Justice of God hath overtaken him*; or any Thing to the same Effect; not meaning thereby to censure him for what I do not see, but to take Caution to myself from what I do see. Much less would it be judging *uncharitably*. For to judge uncharitably of another, is to think him worse than any known Evidence will shew him to be; which would, indeed, be the Case, if from the Evil which I see, I should infer the Sin of which I know nothing: For suffering Evil is no Evidence of Sin. But supposing the Sin seen and known by its proper Evidence; when I judge that the Evil which follows is sent as its Punishment; such Judgment hath nothing to do with the *Man* but with *God*

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only, whom I suppose to be executing his own righteous Decrees, as manifested to us in his holy Word; in which, even should I be mistaken, I pay him Honour.

We may dishonour God, greatly to our own Hurt, by giving him too little in the Government of the World. There is no Hazard of our giving him too much, so long as we give him nothing that interferes with the Perfections of his Nature, or with the Liberty of the human Will. Therefore the Scripture puts all Things into his Hands, the Good as well as the Evil: The first to engage our Love; the latter to alarm our Fears; and both to lead us to a true acceptable Worship. His Blessings we are too apt to neglect; but his Judgments will call us back to ourselves, if we are not more senseless than the Brutes; and therefore are they sent, as the Prophet speaks, *Isaiah xxvi. 9. When thy Judgments are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteousness.* In some Sense, God's Judgments are always in the Earth; for not a Day, or an Hour of a Day passeth, but Evil, in in some Shape or other, haunteth the Sons
of

of Men. But God's Judgments are emphatically said to be *in the Earth*, when Evil prevails in a Manner, or to a Degree uncommon; as when War, or Famine, or Pestilence rages, and Countries are depopulated and laid waste in great Numbers, by these or other Causes. In these Cases, when great and national Wickednesses lead the Way, it is very natural to us to consider ourselves as under the correcting Hand of God, and it is fit we should do so; not, perhaps, because we have more certain Evidence of a special Interposition in these, than in many other Cases, but, principally, because these Evils, as they are more surprizing, are a stronger Call upon us to recollect and attend to those general Notices, which God hath given us, concerning the Method of his dealing with wicked Men, and with wicked Nations. We must not pretend to weigh the Merits of Nations, any more than of private Men, in the Balance of their outward Prosperity or Adversity; nor venture to foretel that God is just going to destroy a People because they are wicked enough to deserve it. Our sole Business

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is to confess the Sovereign Power of God over all His Creatures, and to fear that Almighty Being, who hath the Instruments both of Preservation and Destruction in his Hand, and who, whenever he thinks fit to make an End of us, can do it in a Moment.

F I N I S.



